
ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL VOLUNTEER POLICY

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 Pursuant to Overview & Scrutiny Procedure Rule 15c, Cllrs Mrs J R Gooding, J E Newport and A H Eves have requested that the decision made by the Portfolio Holder for Environment in respect of the Rochford District Council volunteer policy on 14 March 2023 be called in for scrutiny:-

1.2 Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy

That the new Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Agreement and the Guide to Managing Volunteers be approved.

1.3 The above Members of the Overview & Scrutiny Committee have called-in the decision due to the fact that existing litter pick groups have not been consulted on the proposal to enforce all volunteers to sign the policy.

1.4 To assist Members, a copy of the original Portfolio Holder decision and report is appended.



Andrew Hunkin

Interim Director of People & Governance

Background Papers:-

None.

For further information please contact Sonia Worthington, Principal Democratic & Corporate Services Officer, on:-

Phone: 01702 318141

Email: Sonia.worthington@rochford.gov.uk

If you would like this report in large print, Braille or another language please contact 01702 318111.

EXECUTIVE DECISION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT

SUBJECT: ROCHFORD DISTRICT COUNCIL VOLUNTEER POLICY

1 DECISION MADE

1.1 That the new Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Agreement and the Guide to Managing Volunteers, as per the appended documents, be approved.

2 NAME OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER

2.1 Cllr David Sperring

3 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

3.1 None.

The reasons for the decision and alternative options considered are as set out in the Lead Officer's report (see below). The decision does not depart from Council policy and appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

The decision is urgent and not subject to call-in because [If urgent enter reason here - otherwise delete] .

Portfolio Holder Signature:  _____

Date of Decision: 14 March 2023

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REPORT TO PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR ENVIRONMENT

REPORT FROM DIRECTOR OF ENVIRONMENT

SUBJECT: VOLUNTEER POLICY

1 DECISION BEING RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 That the new Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy, Volunteer Agreement and the Guide to Managing Volunteers, as per the appended documents, be approved.

2 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 Rochford District Council does not currently have a formal policy for the recruitment and support of volunteers who wish to take part in activities and work parties in and around the district. The approval of this policy will enable Rochford District Council to recruit and manage volunteers.
- 2.2 The approval of this policy will allow Rochford District Council officers to formally manage a Volunteering Service, which will in turn provide a community and social benefit to our residents and the Council. This will allow for a direct link to the community and in turn, will provide a benefit to our Council owned assets, understanding and addressing localised issues.
- 2.3 It is expected that volunteers will undertake a variety of works, including but not limited to; litter picking, general gardening works, assisting in events and general woodland and countryside maintenance. This policy is not specific to a department and may be used across the Council.

3 SALIENT INFORMATION

- 3.1 There are three governing documents which will manage the expectations and conduct of volunteers and Council employees;
1. Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy – This document outlines the Aims, Values and Responsibilities of the Council and its Volunteers.
 2. Guide to Managing Volunteers – This document outlines the procedure and practice for Rochford District Council officers for managing volunteers.
 3. Volunteer Agreement – This document is the declaration of which a volunteer and the delegated officer will sign and agree to appoint a volunteer.

- 3.2 The approval of this policy will ensure that reputational risk, harm and compulsory Health and Safety duties are managed in line with the Council's Duty of Care, its commitment to health and safety, and its legal obligations under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974.
- 3.3 It is accepted that all works are voluntary, and that any signed agreement is not legally binding, and that both parties may resolve any agreement at any time.
- 3.4 All voluntary works are unpaid. In exceptional circumstances, a volunteer may request recompense for 'out of pocket expenses. Any request must be agreed before an activity takes place and will be at the discretion of the responsible manager. It is the duty of the responsible manager to ensure legal and budgetary concerns are considered.
- 3.5 All volunteers will be covered under the Council's existing insurance policies. It is the responsibility of the responsible manager to ensure all mitigations are in place to protect the Council and the Volunteers for the works that they undertake.
- 3.6 Rochford District Council is aware of some groups of self-proclaimed volunteers currently operate within the district without the consent of the Council. The approval of this policy will allow the Council to formalise these arrangements and ensure that both the Council, its Officers and the Volunteers are protected.

4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 4.1 That the existing ad-hoc informal arrangement is continued.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 None.

6 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Legal implications and obligations are set out in the report.
- 6.2 It is accepted that Volunteers may become privileged to some sensitive Council data whilst undertaking their duties. These are generally thought to be operational and low risk. These risks will be managed through this policy.

7 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed and found there to be no impacts (either positive or negative) on protected groups as defined under the Equality Act 2010

I confirm that the above recommendation does not depart from Council policy and that appropriate consideration has been given to any budgetary and legal implications.

LT Lead Officer Signature: _____



Date: 14 March 2023

For further information please contact Adam Aldridge, Green Spaces Service Manager (interim)

Phone: 01702 318053

Email: Adam.aldridge@rochford.gov.uk

Note: Please ensure that Member Services are provided with the original of the decision on the day it is taken (or by 10 am the following morning at the latest) to en

Rochford District Council

Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy – Volunteer Agreement



Volunteers are an important and valued part of Rochford District Council. We appreciate that you've chosen to volunteer with us. We will do our best to make your volunteer experience enjoyable and rewarding; and aim to be flexible and supportive.

This agreement sets out:

- The support provided by the Council when you volunteer
- The expectations from you as a volunteer

You can expect us to:

- Offer induction, training, and support for your specific voluntary role
- Take reasonable steps to ensure all volunteers are treated fairly
- Give information about the Council's relevant policies and procedures.
- Reimburse agreed expenses.
- Strive to resolve any concerns fairly and reasonably, applying our complaints procedure when it's needed.
- Respect and listen to your feedback, and keep you informed of any changes
- Ensure your health, safety, and welfare
- Apply our Equal Opportunities policy

As a volunteer we ask that you:

- Perform your volunteer role to the best of your ability
- Go to any briefings and training that we think will help you in your role
- Follow and operate within the policies and procedures of the Council, including Health and Safety and Equal Opportunities
- Act responsibly and within the law
- Maintain confidentiality of Rochford District Council's activity, the people in our care, our team, and our procedures
- Value and respect the rights of others
- Work in partnership with staff and volunteers to make society a better place for our beneficiaries

- Let your volunteer manager know if you are having any problems or if you have any complaints, concerns, or feedback
- Meet agreed time commitments and give reasonable notice when you're not available so that arrangements can be made

Various policies and procedures are in place to ensure that your time spent volunteering is enjoyable and safe. They are also there to ensure that if a problem does occur it can be dealt with quickly and effectively. Relevant policies can be found in the **Volunteer policy**.

This agreement is in honour only. It is not intended to be a legally binding contract and either Rochford District Council or the volunteer can end the agreement at any time.

Signature of Volunteer

Print name

Date

Signature on behalf of Rochford District Council

Print name

Date

Rochford District Council

Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy – Managers Guide for Volunteers



This guide has been produced in line with the Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy. This is an internal document to be used by Managers and those managing volunteers.

This document has been produced to outline the role and expectation of the volunteer manager, regarding safeguarding volunteers. It covers:

- Insurance Policy
- Health and safety
- Data protection
- Recruitment
- Inclusion and Diversity
- Monitoring and Evaluation of Volunteers
- Pandemic Precautions

Insurance

When working directly for Rochford District Council (RDC) in connection with the business, volunteers are covered under the same protection as RDC employees. If there are any queries about insurance cover for activities, contact RDC insurance via insurance@rochford.gov.uk.

Health and Safety

RDC has a duty of care to protect their volunteers from harm. The result of not mitigating hazards could mean RDC is liable if a volunteer is injured.

A volunteer manager will need to assess any potential risks that volunteers may encounter and take steps to minimise them, produced in the form of a risk assessment.

A 5-step approach to risk assessment is recommended:

1. Look for the hazards
2. Decide who may be harmed and how
3. For each hazard, evaluate the chance of harm and decide whether existing precautions are adequate or more should be done

4. Record the significant findings of your risk assessment, eg the main risks and the measures you have taken to deal with them
5. Review your assessment from time to time and revise if necessary

It is important as the volunteer manager to consider steps that can be taken to minimise risk, such as:

- Give information and training to volunteers
- Introduce more supervision
- Introduce different working practices
- Use protective clothing or equipment
- Stop the activity altogether
- Employ safer recruitment practices
- Ensure data protection

Data Protection

The recruitment process could require access to personal information. This could include, but is not limited to:

- Contact details
- Details of experience, skills and preferences used to assess suitability for a role (recorded on an application form or gained through interview)
- Monitoring information including ethnicity, disability, mental health, medical etc
- Information relating to DBS checks
- References
- Supervision notes

Certain information is regarded as “sensitive data” under the Data Protection Act 2018 and must be processed accordingly. Therefore, sensitive information about an individual should only be collected and recorded on a ‘need to know’ basis. The volunteer manager must discuss with Human Resources to ensure there are specific security procedures relating to volunteers’ files to guard against anyone seeing the information that shouldn’t or data getting damaged, lost or destroyed.

Managers should also be aware that volunteers have the right to make a request to access all data RDC holds about them.

Recruitment

Before recruitment takes place, the volunteer manager must evaluate if they have the resources available to support volunteers. If resources are plentiful, then secondary action should be to notify necessary persons of recruiting new volunteers, these include:

- RDC and Parish Councillors
- Staff whose workload could be affected by the introduction of volunteers
- Existing volunteers

After consent is granted by necessary persons, there is important information to note during recruitment:

- The volunteer manager should ensure that everyone at RDC knows whom to direct enquiries about volunteering to.
- Volunteers will not be used as a substitute for paid staff and the quality of service will not be lessened due to delivery by volunteers.
- Volunteer work should not directly attempt to exclude persons with additional support needs, and instead aim to attract a broad range of people.

The volunteer manager will be expected to produce the volunteer job description, the description should aim to include:

- Role title
- Purpose of role
- Outline of tasks
- Time commitment
- Location
- Support or supervision available
- Training offered or required
- Expenses, if any
- Person Specification e.g. any skills, qualities or experience required for the role

It is important for the volunteer manager to remember to keep in regular contact with people waiting to start volunteering, as this can prevent people from losing interest in the volunteering opportunity. This contact should be made accessible through different platforms, such as phone, email, or letter.

Inclusion and diversity

Diversity within a volunteer group should be monitored by the volunteer manager in order to evaluate inclusivity. Being inclusive is about equality and should be at the heart of any volunteering opportunity.

There are many advantages of a diverse team. These include:

- The creation of a more positive and inclusive profile and public image
- Being representative of the wider society by the involvement of volunteers from different social, cultural, and ethnic backgrounds
- Being more able to understand and respond to the needs of your local community
- A broader range of skills and abilities
- Eligibility for wider sources of funding

Diversity can cover:

- Race
- Culture
- National origin
- Region
- Gender
- Sexual orientation
- Age
- Marital status
- Politics
- Religion
- Faith
- Ethnicity
- Disability
- Socio-economic differences
- Family structure
- Health
- Value

To promote diversity, you must:

Advertise opportunities to volunteers through multiple media sources, such as leaflets, posters, social networking sites and local media.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Evaluating volunteer sessions is beneficial for future development, it is a way to identify areas of improvement, enhance safety measures, and find out the quality of the volunteer's experience. Monitoring and evaluation also allow RDC to identify the impact that volunteers have on the organisation, both in terms of their contribution and their economic value.

Monitoring allows the volunteer manager to maintain a record of:

- The number of volunteers
- Demographic information
- The economic value of volunteer's contributions (volunteering hours x hourly wage)
- The costs of involving volunteers

Covid-19 precautions

It is the volunteer managers responsibility to stay updated on the government's rules for Covid-19. All volunteering opportunities should adhere to government recommendations.

FAQs

Volunteering whilst on welfare benefits

A person can volunteer whilst in receipt of welfare benefits, however, there are some rules based on the number of job search hours required and how many volunteering hours can be counted towards this. For clear guidance visit the **NVCO website**

Can you volunteer if you're a non UK resident?

If unsure someone can qualify to be a volunteer check the NCVO knowhow website.

Rochford District Council

Rochford District Council Volunteer Policy – Guide for Volunteers



Introduction

Volunteering for Rochford District Council (RDC) is an unpaid activity in which a person gives their personal time, skills and experience freely to help the organisation without expectation of financial reward. There are many reasons people engage in voluntary work, including:

- To socialise
- To contribute to society
- To develop new employable skills
- To build the bridge between the local community and the organisation

The Council recognises and appreciates the importance of volunteers. Their knowledge of the local area and specialist skills help to enhance the local community and services provided by staff at RDC. The council greatly values the work conducted by volunteers and is committed to the involvement of volunteers in appropriate activities.

Aims

The volunteer policy has been produced to ensure that best practice by volunteers and RDC is sustained when both parties collaborate. This policy aims to:

- Enable collaboration between volunteers and the Council.
- Ensure supportive measures, training and supervision is provided to Council volunteers.
- Set out the standards volunteers, and Council employees are expected to adhere to.
- Provide Council staff with guidance on working with volunteers
- Ensure volunteers are engaged in meaningful volunteer work that contributes positively to the Council and district.
- Identify and cover the cost of involving volunteers internally.

Status of volunteers

Although volunteers work closely with the Council, they are not employed by the Council. Therefore, there is no legally binding contract between RDC and individual volunteers. Despite this, the council will agree a role with the volunteer and the expectations. It is encouraged for volunteers to notify the Council of any absence or withdrawal from voluntary service.

Values and Principles

It is recognised by the Council that volunteer work will complement the work of Council staff, with the Council ensuring all volunteers are treated fairly. Council staff will be aware of the volunteer's work, so that roles are not overreached and a good, healthy working relationship between both parties is established.

Volunteer work is non-contractual; therefore, volunteers have no legal obligation to complete work. This should be recognised by both the volunteers and Council staff. It should also be noted that there is no legal obligation for the Council to provide regular work, payment or other benefits for volunteers undertaking work.

Equality and Diversity

Although volunteers are not covered by the **Equality Act 2010**, the Council will not discriminate against any volunteers, and will ensure that all volunteer opportunities are available to everyone who wishes to participate. Decisions made about an individual's suitability for tasks, or volunteering within the Council, will be made in accordance with equality legislation.

Volunteers are expected to adhere to the Council's **Equalities and Diversity policies**, ensuring their own conduct when volunteering does not discriminate or breach equality legislation. Further expectations of volunteers are outlined in the Volunteer Agreement.

Recruitment of Volunteers

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and making voluntary work accessible to all. Persons are required to be 18 years or over to participate in voluntary work. A person wishing to become a volunteer will be asked to apply by completing an expression of interest form/application form. Selection of volunteers is based on competency to conduct agreed tasks. Unsuitable volunteers will be offered alternative tasks which meet their competency level if an alternative opportunity is available. The Council will order safer recruitment checks for tasks, such as DBS, right to work, and basic health checks to ensure the safety of all involved (**see Appendix 1: Protocol for recruitment**).

The Council will aim to recruit volunteers through multiple avenues, including word of mouth, visual advertisements and contacting local volunteering organisations. All volunteers are expected to sign a Volunteer Agreement, which requires them to abide by the policies and procedures upheld by RDC.

Rochford & Rayleigh Association of Voluntary Services

The RRAVS should support volunteers and provide a platform for volunteers to enquire about voluntary work, ask questions and give ideas.

This service can be contacted by phone, online or in person:

Telephone: 01268 772796

Email: rravs@rravs.org.uk

Office location: The Courtyard, The Parish Centre, Rectory Garth, Rayleigh, Essex, SS6 8BB

Health and Safety

Managers and Volunteer Coordinators are expected to update themselves on the guide to managing a volunteer and keep up to date on health and safety procedures. Managers are also expected to, where applicable, provide continuous supervised support, equal to support given to paid staff members.

The Council acknowledges the duty of care it must uphold in order to reduce risk. All volunteers will be made aware of the council's health and safety measures and procedures as part of their induction and be expected to comply with these before commencing work. All volunteer roles will be risk assessed, covering the environment and tasks involved, any volunteers with pre-existing medical conditions or disability will have a separate risk assessment personalised. If the tasks require PPE, the Council will provide the volunteers as they would with any employee.

Risk Assessment

The Council's volunteering risk assessment must include, but is not limited to:

- The job or activity
- The existing competency of volunteers
- The circumstances of the work (e.g., the degree of supervision necessary)
- The tools and/or equipment being used
- Training requirements of volunteers - the training standard must be sufficient to ensure the Health and Safety of volunteers and any people who might be affected by the work.

Training

Within every volunteer's induction, all should be made aware of the Council's confidentiality and data protection policies. Training on safeguarding of children and adults should also be provided. The Council will follow procedures outlined by the DBS to ensure the safety of children and vulnerable adults. Volunteers must be cleared by the DBS to participate in tasks which are outlined in the DBS criteria.

Support and Supervision

All volunteer opportunities will have a supervisor present. The volunteer supervisor is there to support the volunteers by explaining and helping to conduct tasks, they are also present to listen to any feedback volunteers wish to relay.

Recompense

Volunteers are unpaid. The council will not provide out-of-pocket expenses. In unique circumstances, recompense may be considered. However, the reimbursement must be confirmed with the volunteer manager before the activity commences.

Insurance Policy

Volunteers must look after their own possessions whilst volunteering, the Council will not take responsibility for any volunteer's possessions if lost or damaged.

Complaints

Volunteers are not employed by the Council, and so are not entitled to the Council's grievance policy. However, volunteers are entitled to the **Comments, Compliments and Complaint's procedure**. If possible, volunteers should first aim their complaint to the volunteer supervisor, who will attempt to resolve the issue informally. Where deemed necessary, the supervisor will conduct a formal investigation. If the complaint centres around the supervisors' actions, the complaint should be raised to the volunteer manager.

Complaints against other volunteers will be investigated by the supervisor and dealt in a quick and informal manner. In severe cases, the volunteer may be told to stop voluntary service with immediate effect and will no longer be permitted to volunteer for the Council.

Recipients of Benefits

Volunteers are responsible for researching how voluntary work affects their entitlement to social security benefits. Further advice should be attained through **The Department of Work & Pension**.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about the organisation, its staff, and third parties. Volunteers should not disclose this information or use it for their own or another's benefit without the consent of the party concerned.

Data protection

Data collected during the recruitment process is managed by the Council in accordance with its Data Protection Policy. In particular, data collected as part of the application process is held securely and only accessed by, and disclosed to, individuals involved in management of volunteer relationships.

Appendix 1: Protocol for Recruitment

1. Volunteer manager recognises volunteering opportunity
2. The volunteer opportunity is organised (risk assessed, aims and action plan produced) and an advertisement is created.
3. The advertisement is published on Rochford District Council website, social media outlets and notified to local volunteer organisations.
4. Interested volunteers will contact the Council through these channels.
5. The volunteer manager will then send out to interested volunteers the required forms and inform them of relevant information. An interview may then take place.
6. Posts requiring a DBS or health check surveillance will expect the volunteer manager to send information to HR for the check to be completed. The manager will also conduct safer recruitment checks.
7. A volunteer personal file is created for each individual, induction is arranged, relevant training is completed, and start dates will be sent out. All personal data collected during recruitment and application processes will be managed in accordance with the Council's Data Protection Policy.
8. Volunteering commences, with support and supervision in place.
9. Volunteering activity ends, volunteers are thanked and sent feedback links to complete.