

REPORT TO	ON
CABINET COUNCIL	Wednesday, 14 <sup>th</sup> October 2020



TITLE	PORTFOLIO	REPORT OF
Volunteering Policy and Framework	Cabinet Member (Community Engagement, Social Justice and Wealth Building)	Director of Neighbourhoods and Development

Is this report a <b>KEY DECISION</b> (i.e. more than £100,000 or impacting on more than 2 Borough wards?)	N
Is this report on the <b>Statutory Cabinet Forward Plan</b> ?	Yes
Is the request outside the policy and budgetary framework and therefore subject to confirmation at full Council? This should only be in exceptional circumstances.	No
Is this report confidential?	No

#### PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- To provide Cabinet for their decision, a policy providing a standard and clear framework to recruit, retain and support volunteering with the Council. A second policy is included to set out the framework for how the Council will enable its own employees to volunteer.

#### PORTFOLIO RECOMMENDATIONS

- To approve and implement the policy for 'Volunteering with the Council'.
- To approve and implement the policy for 'Employee Volunteering'.

#### REASONS FOR THE DECISION

- The development of a volunteer framework and policy was identified within the Corporate Plan, under the theme of People and Communities. The decision will enable the council to develop a consistent approach to volunteering for the Council.

#### CORPORATE OUTCOMES

- The report relates to the following corporate priorities: (tick all those applicable):

Excellence, Investment and Financial Sustainability	
Health, Wellbeing and Safety	
Place, Homes and Environment	

Projects relating to People in the Corporate Plan:

Our People and Communities	✓
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## **BACKGROUND TO THE REPORT**

6. A previous report was first presented to Council on 6<sup>th</sup> February 2019, with the decision to undertake consultation with stakeholders and to provide a further report relating to provision of an expenses scheme to encourage engagement from individuals who may be financially excluded. Since that decision there has been a change in administration following the election in May 2019. Recently the Council has become a member of the 'Co-operative Councils Network' which provides a set of principles and framework for the way in which the Council works with its communities and partners.
7. The impact of Covid 19 on volunteering, locally and nationally is not yet clear but there are early indications that 'volunteering' has changed in terms of demographics and the way in which individuals want to get involved within their community. A growing movement of 'mutual aid' is not volunteering in terms of formal and regulated activity but has been about responding to individuals who need help and reactive. This may be more popularly seen as Facebook community groups and Covid 19 communities etc.
8. Another impact of Covid 19 has been groups losing some of their older and regular volunteers as they have shielded or have other health conditions and so anecdotally the council is aware that trustees and other types of volunteers within an older age demographic have 'retired' from their roles. This translates into a volunteer demographic that is potentially of working age, with less time to commit. The opportunity for the Council is to implement a policy that will provide wider opportunities for people to volunteer with the organisation, as well providing employees the opportunity to volunteer and support their local community in a very practical and tangible way.
9. The Council's role with South Ribble Partnership and the Community Strategy also links directly with the way in which the Council leads as an organisation in the way volunteers are supported and how the Council enables its own employees to volunteer. Already the Council is a funding partner in the Partnership's Time Credits initiative and the volunteer policy provides an opportunity to better integrate the time credit approach to promote and engage volunteers.

## **PROPOSALS (e.g. RATIONALE, DETAIL, FINANCIAL, PROCUREMENT)**

10. There are currently just over 190 individuals that volunteer with the Council, and it is without the time and commitment provided by these individuals that services such as the museum or activities in our park would not be able to take place.
11. However, if the Council is to get the most from its volunteers and ensure that people who give their time freely are supported well and have the opportunity to develop their skills and in some cases employment prospects, then a clear policy and consistent approach dealing with the recruitment and retention is essential. Feedback from existing officers who co-ordinate and work with volunteers demonstrates that there is varied levels of support, training and resources to help both employee and volunteer get the most out of their time.

### **Volunteering for the Council**

12. This policy sets out a framework for officers and services to enable them to consistently develop volunteering opportunities, promote them in a fair and open way as well as identifying the way in which volunteers should be supported.
13. Volunteering with the Council may either be formal or informal. By informal, these will be opportunities where communities are invited to take part in open events such as a litter pick. In those cases, the Council will keep the process clear, simple and

unbureaucratic, by providing on the day briefings relevant to the activity.

14. However, for those individuals who apply to be a volunteer, a role profile will set out what the opportunity entails and how they will be supported and any training they would need to evidence or undertake. By developing a role-based approach, a service will be able to define how the volunteering role will be able to support the service and have director sign off to ensure that any relevant safeguarding and training requirements are identified before the volunteer role is promoted.
15. In promoting the volunteer role, a consistent approach will be taken, by using a digital platform such as Tempo Communities, to post the available opportunities for people to volunteer with the council and how they can apply. Paper copies will always be made available.
16. Services will be supported to considered develop volunteer-based roles beyond those already offered by the council. This may include opportunities such as digital befriending/champions and cycle ride leaders.
17. Training and development is at the heart of the policy to support volunteers (where they want to) to undertake relevant training and if possible, gain qualifications or accreditations. Employees will also be provided training where appropriate if they are to support and co-ordinate volunteers. There are several training courses and providers out there which are fully funded and can be accessed by the Council.
18. An expenses scheme has been included within the policy, which is provided on the basis to ensure individuals who may be financially excluded are able to get involved and volunteer. The scheme operates on an exception basis whereby a volunteer is able to get expenses for commuting to and from the place of volunteering.

#### **Volunteering as an employee of South Ribble Borough Council**

19. In the spirit of a co-operative Council, the employee volunteering policy sets out a framework for the Council to support the wider community and voluntary sector within South Ribble.
20. At the core of the policy is the principle that if the Council encourages people to volunteer for the organisation, that in return our own employees are supported to through an annual allowance of paid leave that can be used to undertake a volunteer role with a local community or voluntary group.
21. Partners, particularly within the Voluntary and 3<sup>rd</sup> sector identified the need for volunteers such as trustees, web and digital support, fundraising and grant application writing. South Ribble Partnership in response identified within its community strategy, the need to develop an employee led volunteer programme. This is currently being defined and to be agreed in September. The proposed policy for South Ribble Council is broadly aligned to the wider South Ribble framework, and early adoption will set the Council as a leader locally in driving the wider partnership framework forward.
22. The policy provides up to 3 days (pro rata) leave per year, which may be taken as a block to support a local group in an activity or it can be taken as hours over a longer period, supporting such functions as trustees or grant writing types of activities.
23. The execution of the policy would seek to align an individual employee's development needs with potential volunteer opportunities that can provide experience and

development on a professional and personal basis.

24. There are variances in working hours and column points on the pay scales across the organisation, so only an estimate can be provided on the number of hours and cost the policy represents to the council and the community. Based on all employees who work 37 hours per week, the average salary in each grade (where employees are on career grades the average of the highest grade possible has been used), the Council has the potential to provide over 4,000 hours of volunteering to local groups/organisations and up to £70,000 of time (rounded to nearest £1,000) which represents a significant investment in kind to local communities. This directly supports the Council's efforts around wealth building and cooperative council principles.

#### **Implementation of the Policy**

25. It is proposed that this process and implementation be undertaken in the remaining quarter 3 and 4 of 2020-21 with the policy to be fully live by April 2021. Performance and Partnerships will lead on its implementation and support services to understand the requirements for their teams and departments.
26. The key tasks that will need to be completed before April 2021 are:
- a) Existing volunteer roles of the Council will need to be reviewed by the services and the role profile agreed;
  - b) A data collection exercise will be required to standardise the information held on all volunteers currently engaged with the Council and where inductions have not been undertaken, these should be delivered;
  - c) Service planning and Professional Development Plan documentation will need to be updated to include a section on volunteering, with appropriate guidance for managers and employees.
  - d) A training programme will be developed with existing partners to support employee, manager and volunteer.
27. It should be noted that in working with our existing volunteers, the transition process to the formalised structures will be done considerately and positively. The spirit of both policies is about mutual support, co-operation and giving.

#### **CONSULTATION CARRIED OUT AND OUTCOME OF CONSULTATION**

28. Consultation with key partners and stakeholders took place through interviews and workshops as part of the Community Strategy development. It identified the poor community and voluntary infrastructure in the Borough and the need for space to network and share good practise and to ensure it is adequately resourced.
29. South Ribble Community Powwow took place, December 2018 and was focused on volunteering and community participation. The Powwow looked at several different tools and approaches to volunteering. This included incentives to encourage engagement social isolation is addressed through volunteers that take on a focused project or activity.
30. Consultation with officers took place in January 2020 to assess the current number of volunteers engaged with the council, whether inductions are conducted and how supported as officers they feel in their role as volunteer managers/coordinators. The sample size was small, and the results varied, but it provided evidence that with respect to the way in which the Council manages volunteers, it is inconsistent across services. Inductions were provided to some volunteers and not others, and whilst officers felt

supported in the time, they were provided to undertake supporting volunteers, they didn't feel they had support to undertake appropriate training relating volunteer management.

## **ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED**

31. The current position is inconsistent and ad-hoc, with no structure or corporate influence to identify volunteer opportunities within services. There is neither a consistent way in which volunteers are recruited or inducted into the organisation, presenting risk and potential to not get the best experience for both volunteer and officer. To continue is not feasible, if the Council wishes to develop how it works with and engages in a cooperative way with communities and individuals who want to get involved in their communities.
32. Employee volunteering and the level of paid leave has been considered in terms of either 1, 2 or 3 days. In 2016, the government had proposed 3 days paid volunteering leave for any organisation over 250 employees. Whilst this has not been taken forward, it set a standard target to aim for. In providing 3 days, it would enable a short and focused volunteering period for an employee to take part in a local project or it can provide sufficient hours to take part in a longer-term development process such as professional development through serving as a trustee.

## **AIR QUALITY IMPLICATIONS**

33. N/A

## **RISK MANAGEMENT**

34. The implementation of the policy seeks to mitigate a number of risks around volunteers:
  - ▶ Greater emphasis on training and support both for volunteer and employee
  - ▶ Formal induction process that will cover key topics such as health and safety and safeguarding and well as conduct and behaviour
  - ▶ A complaints process that can be used to resolve issues
35. The main risks that will be managed are:
  - ▶ Inconsistent adoption of the policy across services of the Council and its application by managers – As part of the implementation of the policy training and communication will be provided to key managers as well as integrating the development process into the professional development process for employees and service planning process for directorates.
  - ▶ Potential for fraud on the expenses scheme – the level of expenses would be of low value, but sufficient controls for processing payment through the Council's own payment system and use of application forms and proof of incurred expenditure should limit risk in this area.
  - ▶ Potential for abuse of volunteer days by employees – as a risk this is low as the process to obtain leave will be managed with both employee and manager and the time provided accounted for.
  - ▶ Limited opportunities for volunteering with the Council are developed – as part of the service planning process and support from Performance and Partnerships services will be encouraged to consider roles for volunteers, particularly on how it can support individuals step in to employment or deliver added value on services provided by the council that cannot be achieved through paid employment.

### **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPACT**

- 36.** The policy makes clear its commitment to equality and diversity and for the first time sets out clearly how volunteers who may previously have been disadvantaged will be able to take part in volunteering.
- 37.** The inclusion of Dementia Friends sessions further marks the Council's commitment to ensuring that the experience for volunteers living with dementia or as a carer is a positive one. The principle can clearly be extended to any individual who may have specific needs or caring responsibilities that require a more flexible approach to volunteering with the Council.

### **COMMENTS OF THE STATUTORY FINANCE OFFICER**

- 38.** Employee time is a notional cost of this project and will be borne by the relevant salary budgets. Expenses to volunteers is a new cost and will be monitored to ensure costs are managed and budgeted correctly.

### **COMMENTS OF THE MONITORING OFFICER**

The legal issues have already been raised within the body of the report.

### **BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS (or There are no background papers to this report)**

List any background documents which are relevant, including policy documents or previous Cabinet reports. Remember for a public report all background documents referred to are open to public inspection on request. Use links to any web-based documents.

### **APPENDICES (or There are no appendices to this report)**

List the appendices in the order that they are attached to the report with titles as appropriate. Any spreadsheets/diagrams should be in pdf format and be headed up

- Appendix 1 Volunteering with the Council (Policy)
- Appendix 2 Employee Volunteer Policy 2020

Jennifer Mullin  
Director of Neighbourhoods and Development

Report Author:	Telephone:	Date:
Howard Anthony (Policy, Performance and Partnerships Manager)	01772 625546	25/09/20