



VOLUNTEER POLICY

WRITTEN BY:

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REVIEWED:

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Finance Strategy & Management Committee – 26 November 2024

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REVIEW DATE:

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Biddulph Town Council recognises that volunteers help solve real problems and enrich communities. Volunteers help us to:

- Contribute to the delivery of our services.
- Make sure we are responsive to the needs of our users.
- Provide different skills and perspectives.
- Offer opportunities for participation by people who might otherwise be excluded.

This Volunteer Policy sets out the principles and practice by which we involve volunteers, clarifying the aims, expectations and legal protection.

1.2 Biddulph Town Council is the level of government closest to the people that live in the town. The Town Council supports and organises a significant number of community events and projects during the year; with a small staff team, volunteers are essential to ensure that projects are successful, effective and inclusive.

Volunteers help visitors to feel welcome in the 'Garden Town of Staffordshire'.

1.3 At the January 2018 Human Resources Committee meeting, Councillors resolved that volunteers may work within the Town Council offices to support

staff and add value to the work of the Town Council; this may involve young people wishing to complete work experience, older people wanting experience to return to the world of work, etc.

The Town Council continues to aspire to support the community through providing volunteering opportunities.

OBJECTIVES OF THE POLICY

2.1 This Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Biddulph Town Council will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the Town Council's work.
- Biddulph Town Council does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff.
- Biddulph Town Council expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers and, where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work.
- Biddulph Town Council recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively.
- Biddulph Town Council will endeavour to identify and cover the costs of involving volunteers.

Biddulph Town Council will endeavour to involve volunteers from a wide range of backgrounds and abilities and ensure our volunteering opportunities are as accessible as possible.

PROVISIONS

3.1 Recruitment of volunteers

Although volunteers work closely with the Council, they are not employed by the Council. Therefore, there is no legally binding contract between Biddulph Town Council and individual volunteers. Where the Town Council identifies that the recruitment of volunteers would be beneficial to a particular project, a job description will be created outlining the specific work that will be undertaken.

The Town Council does not intend to implement contracts for volunteers, but will provide guidance to ensure that volunteers understand the environment in which they will be working.

Opportunities will be advertised to ensure that individuals from a range of backgrounds can access any openings. Any restrictions on recruitment will be explained in terms of how they fit with the purpose of the Town Council and the requirements of the role.

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed to find out what they would like to do, their skills, suitability and how best their potential might be realised. These will be informal discussions.

References will be sought, and volunteers should be aware that Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks may be required. Any costs will be incurred by the Town Council.

3.2 Induction and training

Volunteers will be given induction and training appropriate to the specific tasks to be undertaken.

All volunteers will receive an induction into Biddulph Town Council and their own area of work. Training will be provided as appropriate, which will include a Health and Safety briefing. Where possible volunteers will be entitled to receive additional training on the same basis as paid staff.

3.3 Expenses

Biddulph Town Council will ensure that there is a clear and accessible system to enable volunteers to claim out of pocket expenses.

All volunteers will have their travel and other expenses reimbursed. At the point of reviewing this Policy, mileage expenses are reimbursed at a rate of 45p per mile. Volunteers working a minimum of five hours per day will be able to claim expenses for lunch.

For those volunteers who regularly undertake work outside, payment of expenses will include a contribution towards suitable clothing and equipment. This may include a coat, gloves, hat, torch, hi-vis jacket, etc.

If the volunteer is lone working and the use of a mobile phone may be necessary, a contribution towards this arrangement may be considered. This will be assessed on a case-by-case basis and is at the discretion of the Chief Officer. Volunteer arrangements will be regularly reviewed by the Finance Strategy and Management Committee.

3.4 Supervision and support

Volunteers will be assigned a named contact person who will provide regular support. Support sessions will provide the opportunity for ongoing dialogue

about the development of the volunteering role and any advice and guidance as needed.

3.5 Health and Safety

Volunteers are covered by Biddulph Town Council's **Health and Safety Policy**, a copy of which will be provided at the induction.

All volunteers are covered by Biddulph Town Council's insurance policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any work on Biddulph Town Council's behalf.

3.6 Confidentiality and data protection

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as paid staff. Volunteers are likely to become aware of confidential information about the Council, its employees, partners 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 collected during the recruitment process is managed by the Council in accordance with its Data Protection (GDPR) and Retention Policy. Minimum details will be kept on volunteers. This will include the registration form, references, placement details, crisis contact, correspondence and any other relevant information in accordance with Biddulph Town Council's **Data Protection (GDPR) and Retention Policy**.

3.7 Values and Principles

It is recognised by the Council that volunteer work will complement the work of Council employees, with the Council ensuring all volunteers are treated fairly. Council employees 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 employees. 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.

3.8 Problem solving and complaint procedures for volunteers

Volunteers are not employed by the Council, and so are not entitled to the Council's Disciplinary & Grievance Policy.

However, the Town Council has a **Complaints Policy** which is applicable to volunteers working with the Town Council.

3.9 Equal opportunities

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 **Equal Opportunities Policy**, ensuring their conduct does not discriminate or breach equality legislation.

RELEVANT LEGISLATION

4.1 There is no legal definition of a 'volunteer' or 'intern' and no specific legislation covering employer-volunteer relationships.

Volunteers are not covered by employment legislation but, as members of the public, they are covered by legislation covering health and safety law and data protection.