

# Volunteering Policy

## Reviewed

February 2006

## Policy Number

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## Policy Approval

## Policy Statement

In so far as it does not conflict with its business ethos, and public expectations of cost efficiency, the Council will seek to support, and value, volunteering within East Devon's local communities.

## The Council's Commitments

- The Council has a priority around "Community engagement". It is widely recognised that unpaid volunteering plays an important part in generating community initiatives and community spirit.
- Equally the work of many volunteers can support the other priorities of the Council (eg litter picking) and may even reduce costs the Council would otherwise need to bear.
- Volunteering may take a range of forms, it may be based around organisations (eg parents associations at schools), or be personal (helping a neighbour with shopping). It may also be extensive (running a scout group) or minor (filling in a questionnaire).
- Volunteering is both valued and encouraged by this Council, especially where it supports the Council priorities.
- The Council will seek to publicise opportunities and successes within volunteering, and the value of volunteering.
- The Council will seek to support the main infrastructure organisations for volunteering,
- The Council will seek to support voluntary organisations which can help the Council deliver its objectives. This support will largely be through advice and in-kind assistance.

## How will we go about it?

### Within the Council

As an employer the Council will take reasonable and business-like steps to further encourage the volunteering that many employees already undertake.

- We will seek to recognise special volunteering achievements by our employees.
- We will be flexible in allowing (by prior agreement) small amounts of work time to be used within the offices for community benefit (eg collecting for relevant charitable appeals).
- Where reasonably possible, by the agreement of managers, to allow different work patterns (within the flexi-time system) to allow for the particular needs of volunteering.

- We will allow our staff bulletin, other bulletins (electronic and written) and relevant notice-boards to be used to publicise both charitable organisations, and specific volunteering opportunities, which support the Council objectives.
- If a specific form of volunteering both supports the Council's priorities, and also the particular personal development needs of an officer, we will recognise this through appraisal as approved personal development. (In which case there will be an agreed, finite, period of work-time and any necessary and reasonable expenses allowed, as for other forms of personal development).
- Where we ask volunteers to help us with any of our services or meetings, we will always try to meet any requests for reasonable and verifiable expenses incurred (eg gallery volunteers).
- We will volunteer to support work shadowing or work experience within the Council to a level felt sustainable by the Head of Organisational Development.

## **Outside the Council**

As a community leader the Council will try to facilitate volunteering by people in our community.

- The Council will (within budgetary constraints) select and sponsor certain key 'infrastructure' organisations who encourage and work with volunteers to help achieve the Council's priorities (CAB and EDVSA are the most significantly funded).
- The Council will try to use the views of the voluntary and community sector in its consultative decision making processes, on relevant issues (see Consultation strategy).
- The Council will support (within budgetary constraints) a small grants scheme for community halls and similar infrastructure for community groups and volunteering. Grant criteria for this Community Fund will be aligned to the Council's priorities.
- Where there is a gap in the co-ordination, or networking, of volunteer groups relevant to Council activity, the Council will try to facilitate such a network (eg Junior Countryside rangers, Sports Council for East Devon). Where possible we will try to 'handback' such organisations to the community after the initial development.
- The Council will identify and publicise the ways in which it can assist community and voluntary sector groups and individuals (eg in finding and bidding for grant funding).
- Wherever possible and reasonable the Council will give small scale direct advice, to volunteers and volunteer organisations, or will help by signposting them to other relevant organisations who can do so.
- The Council will help to promote and recognise the special achievements of community volunteers and organisations who through their own efforts have made a difference to our environment and our communities (eg Britain in Bloom).
- The Council will try to assist voluntary bodies and individuals through "in-kind" assistance providing this can be met without incurring unbudgeted costs or staff capacity issues. It must proportionately and clearly support the Council's objectives.

## **Outcomes**

This policy seeks to support the Council's role as community leader, exemplar for other local organisations, and caring employer.

This policy will ensure a framework to support its corporate strategy priority of 'community engagement'.

## **Who is responsible for delivery?**

Whilst all employees, and managers, have a role in enabling this policy there are particular roles for the Corporate Director – Communities (links to voluntary sector bodies), Funding and Consultation Officer (advice and support), and the Head of Organisational Development (role as an employer).

## **Performance Monitoring**

The corporate strategy of 'Community Engagement' is subject to a number of measures set out in the Strategy.

## **Policy Consultation**

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## **Policy Review**

The Corporate Director – Communities will review this policy in light of changing local government obligations and roles.

## **Related Policies and Strategies**

Policy on time for Territorial Army, Union and Magistrates responsibilities.

Consultation Strategy

Flexitime arrangements