



Whitchurch Town Council

29. VOLUNTEERS POLICY (June 2017)

1. Introduction

Whitchurch Town Council is a local council, the tier of government closest to our community.

Our Purpose is to be the champion for improving the quality of life for all of our community so that Whitchurch becomes a great place to live, work and relax.

Our Vision is to grow Whitchurch to be a hub for geographical area, a centre of excellence for its services to the local and wider community, whilst appreciating its sense of place.

In line with our purpose and vision, Whitchurch Town Council seeks to involve volunteers to:

- Ensure that our services meet the needs of our customers
- Provide new skills and perspectives
- Increase our contact with the local community we serve
- Add value to the services that we deliver

2. Principles

The Volunteering Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

- Whitchurch Town Council will ensure that volunteers are integrated into the organisation
- Whitchurch Town Council does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff
- Whitchurch Town Council expects that elected members and staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers
- Whitchurch Town Council accepts the definition of Volunteering as given by the National Compact Code of Volunteering:

<https://www.ncvo.org.uk/policy-and-research/volunteering-policy>

“We 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.

This can include formal activity undertaken through public, private and voluntary organisations as well as informal community participation and social action. Everyone has the right to volunteer and volunteering can have significant benefits for individuals.”

3. Equal Opportunities

Whitchurch Town Council operates an Equal Opportunities Policy in respect of both paid staff and volunteers. A copy is in the Volunteers Handbook. We are committed to making our volunteering programme accessible and attractive to all the local community, therefore we ask volunteers to complete a monitoring form [tbc Appendix A:]. This is so that we can ensure that our work is reaching all sections of the community. The forms are collected and analysed anonymously.

4. Health & Safety

Volunteers are covered by **Whitchurch Town Council's Safety Policy** [50. Safety Policy 2013], a summary will be in the Volunteer's Handbook. The full Council Safety Policy will be available to view within the Constitution on the Town Council website. www.whitchurchcouncil.uk

A **risk assessment** will be completed on each volunteer role to identify any risks associated with the role and agree actions to remove or reduce these risks and ensure a safe volunteering environment. The completed Risk Assessment will be shared with volunteers so they are aware of their responsibility to reduce and control risk. [Appendix B - Risk Assessment template]

All volunteers are covered by Whitchurch Town Council's **insurance** policy whilst they are on the premises or engaged in any activities agreed with Whitchurch Town Council staff in advance. Volunteers are not covered by this insurance if they go beyond the agreed boundaries of their volunteering role.

If a volunteers **has** to use their own car to perform their volunteering role, they should inform their insurance company. This should not affect the cost of the premium and a letter explaining the role of a volunteer drive can be provided if needed. [Appendix C – sample letter for insurance company]

5. Recruitment

Before Whitchurch Town Council recruit to a volunteer role a Role Description and Person Specification will have been agreed by the specific Council Committee or employee who will be supervising the role and the Volunteer Coordinator.

Once this has been agreed recruitment to a role can begin. Whitchurch Town Council will aim to advertise as widely as possible for volunteers, to try to reach a broad section of the community. We will use a range of accessible recruitment methods, including posters, the Town Council website, the Town Council Facebook page and local newsletters.

Other recruitment routes may be agreed, especially if they relate to the skills needed for a specialised volunteer role, (ie, website volunteer).

When someone interested in volunteering contacts Whitchurch Town Council we will respond promptly and invite them for an interview within one week of them first contacting us.

6. Screening

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.

We will ask each volunteer to provide two character references. These cannot be from family members but need not be from current or previous employers. [Appendix D: Letter requesting reference for volunteering]

When a volunteer role involved regular, substantial or unsupervised contact with children or vulnerable adults the volunteer will need to complete a Disclosure & Barring Service check. Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent someone from volunteering at Whitchurch Town Council. All checks will be handled in accordance with the DBS guidelines, the Council's DBS Code of Practice, Child Protection Policy and Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults Policy – enclosed within Volunteer Handbook.

<https://www.gov.uk/disclosure-barring-service-check/overview>

7. Expenses

Whitchurch Town Council recognises that paying out-of-pocket expenses incurred whilst volunteering is a matter of Equal Opportunity; being on a low income should not prevent someone from volunteering. Staff are expected to make sure the costs of volunteer expenses are included at the planning stages of any new project or funding application.

All volunteers will have their travel and other agreed expenses reimbursed. Volunteers helping for more than 4 hours per day will be able to claim expenses for lunch of no more than £3.50. Details on how to claim are included within the Volunteer Handbook.

Volunteering is an unpaid activity done for reasons other than financial gain; therefore only receipted amounts can and should be reimbursed. People receiving benefits are required to let the Job Centre know if they are volunteering, this should not affect their income so long as they receive only actual expenses. Whitchurch Town Council will make sure volunteers are aware of this requirement and are happy to provide further information about their volunteering if required by the Job Centre.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/benefits/benefits-introduction/how-volunteering-affects-your-benefits/>

8. Induction, Training and Development

All volunteers will receive an induction into Whitchurch Town Council and their own area of work. The Volunteer Coordinator and the Line Manager are jointly responsible for the induction. The Volunteer Coordinator will cover the general areas relating to Whitchurch Town Council and the volunteer programme/project and the line manager will cover the role specific elements of the induction.

Training will be provided as appropriate and relevant to the role they have taken. It will be explained to the volunteer in advance which training is compulsory for them to volunteer with us, for instance all volunteers working within the workshop will need Health & Safety and possibly COSHH training. Any essential training will be identified when the role description is first written.

Volunteers will be provided with the equipment, information and access required to complete their tasks.

[Appendix E: Induction Checklist] **yet to be drafted**

9. Support & Supervision

All volunteers will have a named person as their main contact, this will normally be their 'line manager', but the Volunteer Coordinator will also be available as a second point of contact.

Volunteers will be provided with regular supervision to feedback on progress, discuss future development and air any issues. The frequency and format of this supervision may vary depending on the role, the individual volunteer and Whitchurch Town Council's current resources of the organisation. This will be agreed between the Line Manager and volunteer as part of the induction process.

Whitchurch Town Council aims to accommodate all people as volunteers, including those with additional needs. We will endeavour to make the necessary adaptations to enable people to volunteer with us.

10. Involving Volunteers

Volunteers are encouraged to express their views about matters concerning the organisation and that staff will listen to these views and make changes as appropriate. There will be an annual survey of volunteer satisfaction to enable us to monitor and improve the volunteer programme and collect any ideas volunteers have. This will be carried out by the Volunteer Coordinator.

Whitchurch Town Council recognises that good communication is the key to a successful programme and that information must flow two ways. Those staff who line manage volunteers are responsible for ensuring information about changes and developments are communicated swiftly to volunteers, using the most appropriate method.

11. Problem Solving

We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage. A procedure has been drawn up for dealing with complaints, either by or about volunteers. A copy of this procedure is included in the Volunteer Handbook. [Appendix F: Problem Solving Procedure]

12. Volunteering Coming to an End

Whitchurch Town Council recognises that volunteering can be a short term activity and that even those people able to commit for a longer time will eventually leave. There are many reasons for volunteering to come to an end, however we aim to ensure that one of these is not poor support from Whitchurch Town Council. Therefore we will always seek to find out why a volunteer is leaving and to learn from their experience with us.

Anyone who has volunteered for over 3 months or 200 hours will be entitled to a reference; this would normally be provided by the Line Manager who has worked with them most closely.

[Appendix G: Farewell letter and exit questionnaire] *yet to be drafted*

13. Other Policies and Procedures volunteers need to be made aware of:

- Confidentiality Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Child Protection Policy
- Safeguarding of Vulnerable Adults

Appendices:

- A. Monitoring form
- B. Risk Assessment template
- C. Sample letter for insurance company
- D. Letter requesting reference for volunteering
- E. Induction checklist
- F. Problem Solving Process