

Subject:	Employee Volunteering Scheme		
Date of Meeting:	22 July 2010		
Report of:	Director of Strategy & Governance		
Contact Officer:	Name:	Charlotte Thomas	Tel: 29-1290
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Key Decision:	No		
Wards Affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE**1. SUMMARY AND POLICY CONTEXT:**

- 1.1 Brighton & Hove is renowned nationally for having a thriving community and voluntary sector. Volunteering makes an essential contribution to the well being of Brighton and Hove and without it our social care, healthcare, recreational and education systems would be impoverished and the environment that we live in would not be as safe, green and clean as it is.
- 1.2 One of the aims of the "Joining the Dots" Volunteering Strategy for Brighton & Hove 2010 -2015 is to increase the number of people volunteering within the City. One way to achieve this is to encourage local employers to develop Employer-Supported Volunteering Schemes(ESVs).
- 1.3 Many of our employees already volunteer within the community. They make great ambassadors for the council and establish beneficial relationships in the wider community. This helps us to understand better what matters most to our residents so that we can prioritise and improve our services and the way they are delivered.
- 1.4 However, it is felt that we could do more to encourage and support our staff who wish to volunteer and so the council proposes to introduce its own EV Scheme. By doing so, it is also hoped that other organisations within the City will follow the council's lead in getting involved in their local community and making a real difference to people's lives.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 That Cabinet approves:
 - (a) the new Employee Volunteering Scheme attached at Appendix 1.
 - (b) the promotion of the scheme as described in section 3.6 to maximise take-up
 - (c) the monitoring of the effectiveness of the Scheme as described in section 3.6
 - (d) a review of the scheme after it has been in place for 12 months.

3. RELEVANT BACKGROUND INFORMATION/CHRONOLOGY OF KEY EVENTS:

3.1 National picture

- 3.1.1 The 2008/9 Citizenship Survey conducted by the Department for Communities and Local Government found that 26% of adults in England undertook some type of volunteering through a group, club or other organisation. A further 35% did unpaid voluntary work on an individual basis.
- 3.1.2 The survey found that most volunteers were motivated by a desire to improve things in their local communities and to help and support others. However, 58% of those surveyed said that work commitments were a barrier to volunteering.
- 3.1.3 Increasingly, organisations from both the private and public sectors are becoming interested in how their own employees can become involved in volunteering and a variety of programmes are being set up to support employees who wish to volunteer. This is called Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV). (In the 2008/9 Citizenship Survey, approximately 25% of those surveyed said that their employer operated an employee volunteering scheme.)

3.2 Local picture

- 3.2.1 Brighton & Hove has a strong tradition of volunteering and community activism. At the last count there were approximately 19,200 volunteer positions within the City, giving 57,600 volunteer hours per week (an annual salary equivalent to £24 million).
- 3.2.2 It is clear that the voluntary and community sector play an important role in the provision of services and facilities within the City and their contribution becomes even more important at times of recession.
- 3.2.3 Without volunteers and volunteering our statutory social care, healthcare, recreational and education systems would probably collapse.
- 3.2.4 Although a lot of work has already been done to encourage people within Brighton & Hove to volunteer, there is still more that can be done. One of the objectives of The "Joining the Dots" Volunteering Strategy 2010-2015 for Brighton & Hove is to increase participation in volunteering and the number of volunteering opportunities within the City. In terms of regular volunteering, the aim is to get 26.6% of the local population regularly volunteering by 2011.
- 3.2.5 Given the fact that more people would do voluntary work if it weren't for other commitments such as work, the Volunteering Strategy aims to increase the number of local employers operating ESV schemes.

3.3 Volunteering within the council

- 3.3.1 The council already supports, through its Special Leave Policy, employees who wish to undertake voluntary work in the community for example as school governors or magistrates. Anecdotal evidence suggests that many of our staff take advantage of the paid time off given by the council to fulfil these public roles.

3.3.2 In addition to this, it is known that there are many other staff who do valuable voluntary work for charities or community groups in their own time.

3.4 **Why should the council have an EVS**

3.4.1 Many organisations have found that encouraging their employees to volunteer is good for the community, the individual who gives of their time and the business itself.

3.4.2 If the council were to adopt an EVS, these are some of the benefits that are likely to be realised:

Benefits to the community will include:

- a greater opportunity to get their voices heard and acted upon
- the release of additional resources to the voluntary sector
- improvement in local services and amenities
- delivery of the services that the community wants
- greater trust, satisfaction and confidence in the council

Benefits to the employee who is volunteering include:

- an opportunity to work with organisations that can provide new experiences outside of the usual work and social environment
- opportunities to contribute to issues they really care about
- the chance to develop new skills or improve existing ones
- the opportunity to work alongside colleagues in a different context
- achieving a sense of satisfaction from seeing results
- helping the transition between work and retirement

Benefits of Volunteering to the council include:

- supporting city-wide community engagement activity
- building better links with local communities that will help us develop a fuller picture of the needs and priorities of different local communities so enabling us to deliver improved, value for money services
- building greater cultural understanding and awareness between the third and public sector.
- better integrated working both within the council as well as with our partners
- the ability to deliver improved services through the broadening of employees' knowledge and skills
- providing additional resources to the voluntary sector in a very practical and visible way
- a more motivated and satisfied workforce
- improved recruitment and retention.

3.4.3 Given these benefits, and the fact that many of our employees, when consulted at last year's staff conferences, said that they would be interested in having greater opportunities to volunteer with local organisations, a volunteering scheme has been developed for council staff.

3.4.4 As the City's largest employer, it is hoped that by leading by example, other local organisations will be encouraged to become more involved in their local

community and will show support for the City's Volunteering Strategy, by setting up their own employee volunteering schemes.

3.5 **Proposed council EVS**

3.5.1 A copy of the proposed council Employee Volunteering Scheme is attached at Appendix 1. This is separate from the council's Special Leave Policy referred to above in paragraph 3.3.1.

3.5.2 The scheme consists of two Parts. Part 1 is a Policy Statement that sets out the aims of the Scheme, the roles and responsibilities under it and who is eligible to participate. Part 2 clarifies the types of volunteering activity which will be supported, gives guidance on how to find volunteering opportunities and the process for requesting time off under the scheme.

3.5.3 The main provisions of the scheme are as follows:

- employees will be granted up to 15 hours per year with pay to undertake voluntary work within the City (pro rata for part-time and temporary employees)
- participating employees are expected to contribute at least the same amount of their own spare time to undertake voluntary work within the City
- volunteering can be used as a means to help employees meet their personal development needs but this is not its primary purpose
- requests for time off should be approved by the line manager, wherever possible, unless this causes disruption to service delivery or there is a potential conflict of interest between the voluntary work being planned and the individual's work for the council
- agreed volunteering time can be taken on a flexible basis e.g. as hourly blocks or larger blocks of time
- expenses incurred by participating employees will not be reimbursed by the council.

3.5.4 The time off allowed under the scheme is broadly in line with other organisations. See Appendix 2 for time off provided by other employers. Although the amount of leave for volunteering is quite modest, managers should try to support those employees who may want to do more in their own time e.g. by agreeing to more flexible working patterns wherever possible.

Estimated costs of staff time will have some impact on the service area from which the employees are employed. Where back-filling or replacement of the employee's hours is required, managers will need to consider the financial impact and look at options to minimise this. However, it should not be forgotten that employees will still be contributing to the well-being of the community, and so it may be useful to see these costs as a transferral of social capital from the council into the community, rather than as a loss.

3.5.5 The Voluntary sector is very supportive of the council introducing this scheme although they recognise that there may be issues of capacity for voluntary organisations if the Scheme results in a significant uptake by our staff. However, we intend to work with the Business Development Partnership to build on best practice including the "matching" and brokerage of volunteering opportunities.

3.6 **Implementing the Scheme**

3.6.1 We will work closely with the voluntary sector organisations when implementing the Scheme. This will include developing a marketing and communication strategy, in conjunction with the Head of Communications and our voluntary sector partners, to ensure that the Scheme is well publicised so as to maximise take up by staff.

3.6.2 It is therefore proposed to publicise the scheme through:

- the Wave
- Channel Magazine
- messages on payslips
- the Chief Executive's blog

3.6.3 To launch the Scheme, we are exploring the possibility of setting up stands in the main council buildings that would provide information about the types of volunteering opportunities within the City and the council's scheme.

3.6.4 The impact of the Scheme will be monitored using both quantitative and qualitative methods. Measures will include:

- participation rate
- nature of the volunteering
- number of employees volunteering for the first time
- number of volunteer hours worked
- number of volunteering requests turned down.
- number of employees doing additional volunteering in their own time
- equality profile of those participating in the scheme.

3.6.5 This data will be supplemented with qualitative feedback from volunteers and organisations with whom they have worked on how successful the volunteering has been and how the scheme could be improved.

4. **CONSULTATION**

4.1 The council's recognised trade unions have been consulted on this Scheme. No comments have been received from GMB. Unison have said that they would like more time to consult with their members.

4.2 The council's employment lawyer, insurance manager, health, safety and wellbeing manager and the HSE have also been consulted on the aspects of this Scheme relevant to their areas of expertise.

5. **FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:**

5.1 The financial implications of the Employee Volunteering Scheme are measured mainly in paid staff time and therefore the costs associated with the Scheme will be dependent upon the level of take up by staff. Assuming a 6% take up, the cost of staff time foregone for non-schools staff would be in the order of £100,000 assuming no replacement cover. The Governing Body of each school will need to consider whether they adopt the policy.

- 5.2 This cost of staff time would in effect be an in-kind contribution to the community.
- 5.3 The costs associated with producing publicity materials can be met within the allocated budget

Finance Officer Consulted: Anne Silley

Date: 18/06/10

Legal Implications:

- 5.4 The volunteers will remain employees of the council and will be paid by the council whilst they are volunteering. As we will be actively encouraging employees to take part in this Scheme if they wish to, this puts a greater responsibility on the council to do everything reasonable to protect them from being harmed whilst volunteering. The Health and Safety Executive have advised that it would be sensible to treat this in a similar manner to young people undertaking work experience.
- 5.5 This means that to minimise any liability on the council, it will be necessary for line managers to ensure that, prior to any volunteering, their employees will be adequately trained, supported and supervised by the organisation they are volunteering with. They will also need to check that there are appropriate health and safety measures in place and carry out and record risk assessments before the individual starts volunteering.
- 5.6 Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) /Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) checks will need to be carried, where appropriate, on our staff, by the voluntary organisation.

Lawyer Consulted: Liz Culbert

Date: 21/06/10

Equalities Implications:

- 5.7 The scheme is open to all staff who have successfully completed their probationary period. It is hoped that by supporting employees to volunteer we will encourage those from under-represented groups to participate in the Scheme.
- 5.8 Staff may decide to contribute to a volunteering scheme or community challenge which helps people from minority and/or disadvantaged groups within the community.

Sustainability Implications:

- 5.9 Employees may decide to contribute to a volunteering scheme which has a positive environmental impact. For example, conservation work, planting trees, recycling projects etc.

Crime & Disorder Implications:

- 5.10 Some of the projects picked up under the volunteering scheme could well help to address this agenda. For example, employees may wish to volunteer with groups working with young offenders or supporting victims of crime etc.

Risk & Opportunity Management Implications:

- 5.11 The council's liability insurance policies will not cover our employees who are volunteering with another organisation. Therefore, if one of our staff were injured whilst undertaking voluntary work, their initial claim should be made against the organisation for which the voluntary work was being carried out.
- 5.12 However, it is always possible that the council could be drawn in if a serious injury occurred.
- 5.13 It is very important therefore that managers make sure that their employees have checked to make sure that the organisation they propose to volunteer with has suitable liability cover in place to protect them either as volunteers through their Employers Liability Policy or as third parties through their Public Liability Policy. Managers must also make sure that records of the risk assessments they have carried out on the employee's volunteering activity are kept.
- 5.14 For their part employees must ensure they receive appropriate training, including health and safety training, from the voluntary organisation for the activities they are going to undertake. The voluntary organisation will also be responsible for ensuring the fitness of the individual to undertake the voluntary work.
- 5.15 Another potential risk associated with such a scheme relates to the possible impact on the council's image and reputation. If the scheme goes well and is seen to be a success, then the council's reputation will be enhanced. If it is unsuccessful, or there are issues relating to the behaviour or reliability of our volunteers when working in the community then the council's reputation could suffer.

Corporate / Citywide Implications:

- 5.16 It is hoped that the introduction of this scheme will encourage more of our staff to become volunteers with local organisations. More resources within the voluntary sector will make a real difference to people's lives.
- 5.17 Community engagement through our volunteers will help the council understand better the needs and priorities of local people. This information can then help prioritise, commission and deliver improved, value for money services to the local community.
- 5.18 It is also hoped that, by demonstrating to other organisations the benefits that can be realised by supporting employee volunteering, more businesses in the City will follow our lead and set up similar schemes.

6. EVALUATION OF ANY ALTERNATIVE OPTION(S):

- 6.1 The alternatives to introducing the Volunteering Scheme would be not to introduce it or to delay implementation. Developing the Scheme feeds into key objectives of the Brighton & Hove Volunteering Strategy 2010-2015 to promote and increase volunteering and it is considered important that the council is seen to lead in this area.

7. REASONS FOR REPORT RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 The implementation of an Employee Volunteering Scheme will directly support Brighton & Hove's Volunteering Strategy which aims to increase participation in volunteering within the City. By giving our employees time off work to volunteer it is hoped that there will be considerable benefits not only for the community at large but also for our staff and the council as a whole.
- 7.2 It is hoped that by leading by example, other local organisations will be encouraged to become more involved in their local community and will show support for the City's Volunteering Strategy, by setting up their own employee volunteering schemes.

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION

Appendices:

1. Employee Volunteering Scheme.
2. Time off allowed for volunteering activities by other employers.

Documents in Members' Rooms

None

Background Documents

1. "Joining the Dots" Volunteering Strategy for Brighton & Hove 2010-2015