

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

12 November 2007

EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY

REPORT OF HEAD OF ORGANISATIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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RECENT REFERENCES:

None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

This report provides background information regarding the implementation of an Employer Supported Volunteering Policy at the Council. The report explains the benefits to the employee and employer of implementing the initiative.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Head of Organisational Development be authorised to implement an Employer Supported Volunteering Policy Council wide.

PERSONNEL COMMITTEE

12 November 2007

EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING POLICY

Report of Head of Organisational Development

DETAIL:

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to allow and encourage our staff to be involved in volunteering projects across the community to help solve community problems, to allow employees to reflect on their interests and skills to meet organisational priorities.
- 1.2 Winchester City Council recognises the many benefits of employee volunteering, both to individuals and the Community. The Employer Supported Volunteering Policy sets out the Council's policy on promoting and supporting involvement in voluntary activity by its staff.
- 1.3 There are two types of volunteering available under this policy:
 - Work with local communities in Winchester City Council's time with the intention of improving understanding between WCC and the local community whilst the individual learns; or;
 - Work with a Winchester City Council volunteering group towards achieving a specific project
- 1.4 The Council would like to provide the opportunity of up to 3 working days per financial year per employee (pro rata for part time employees) for volunteering; This can be taken by the hour or by the day but must be agreed in advance with Line Manager and Head of Division approval. Any requests outside of these confines should be directed initially to the Head of Division. The Head of Division can use their discretion on approval or decline of the request

2. Aim of the Policy

- 2.1 The aim of the policy is to enable employees to participate in voluntary work at a time to suit them, either after work or at weekends, or with the full support of their employer, during working hours.

3. Benefits of the policy

3.1 To the organisation

3.1.1 Many organisations have learned that encouraging their employees to volunteer is good for the individual, for the community and for the business. Employer supported volunteers improves the employers relationships with its stakeholders, with the local community within which it operates and the wider community.

3.1.2 Organisations with a supported volunteering programme find that:

- Employees are proud to work for them
- Potential employees want to work for them
- Customer perceptions are very positive
- Partners and stakeholders want to work with them.

3.1.3 A successful employer supported volunteering programme will fulfil three key criteria:

- **Addressing community need.** Employers can play an important part in helping to solve community problems
- **Reflecting employee interests and skills.** This can make a real difference to how employees feel about themselves and their employer.
- **Meeting organisational priorities.** A programme that is in line with these priorities can bring tangible benefits to the organisation and will enjoy continuing support.

3.2 To the employee

There are many benefits to the employee for involvement in a volunteering programme

- A chance to develop personal skills such as time management, communication and presentation skills
- An opportunity to work in a completely new environment and develop transferable skills
- The chance to meet and work with colleagues from other departments
- An extra dimension to life by providing new experiences outside of the usual work and social environment
- An opportunity to contribute to an issue that they really care about

4. Evaluations of Previous programmes

- 4.1 Evaluations of programmes in other organisations have suggested that employees particularly benefit from enhanced communication, coaching, listening and teamwork skills. Volunteering can give them an early opportunity to lead projects and have responsibility for motivating others and can be used as a training exercise. Volunteering can expose staff to a much wider range of tasks than that they might normally experience in their day to day work including planning, budgeting, staff and time management.

5. Scope of the Policy

- 5.1 The policy has been considered by CMT who have agreed to the implementation subject to committee approval.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Unison has been made aware of the intention to implement the policy.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

7. CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

Relates to the Corporate Strategy's statement on building safe and strong communities

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

The financial implication of implementing the policy is the opportunity cost to the authority of allowing staff to take up to 3 working days paid leave to undertake a "volunteering activity or project". This will be pro rata for part time employees.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

October 2007

Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

Document Control

Version	V1 draft	Title	Employer Supported Volunteering
Issue Date	October 2007	Author	HR Advisor

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The purpose of this policy is to allow and encourage our staff to be involved in volunteering projects across the community to help solve community problems, to allow employees to reflect on their interests and skills and to meet organisational priorities.

2. SCOPE

- 2.1 This policy applies to all permanent employees of the Council.

3. POLICY

- 3.1 Winchester City Council recognises the many benefits of employee volunteering, both to individuals and the Community. This policy sets out the Council's policy on promoting and supporting involvement in voluntary activity by its staff.

There are two types of volunteering available under this policy:

- Work with local communities in Winchester City Council's time with the intention of improving understanding between WCC and the local community whilst the individual learns, or:
- Work within a WCC volunteering group towards a specific project

The aim of the policy is to enable employees to participate in voluntary work at a time to suit them, either after work or at weekends, or with the full support of their employer, during working hours.

- 3.2 Winchester City Council will allocate up to 3 working days per financial year per employee (pro rata for part time employees) for volunteering. This can be taken by the hour or by the day but must be agreed in advance with your line manager and in turn with the Head of Division and is at the managers discretion. A diary logging the hours taken must be kept by the individual and adjustments on flexi clocks must be made to ensure that the time is specifically taken for voluntary work.

Any request outside of these confines should be directed to your Head of Division who can use their discretion on approval or decline of the request due to operational constraints.

- 3.3 Many organisations have learned that encouraging their employees to volunteer is good for the individual, for the community and for business. Employer supported volunteers improves the employers relationship with its stakeholders, with the local community within which it operates and the wider community.

Organisations with a supported volunteering programme find that:

- Employees are proud to work for them

- Potential employees want to work for them
- Customers perceptions are very positive
- Partners/stakeholders want to work with them

3.4 Successful employer supported volunteering programmes fulfill three key criteria:

Addressing community need. Employers can play an important part in helping to solve community problems.

Reflecting employee interests and skills. This can make a real difference to how employees feel about themselves and their employer.

Meeting organisational priorities. A programme that is in line with these priorities can bring tangible benefits to the organisation and will enjoy continuing support.

Employer supported volunteers with professional skills can for example;

- Produce business plans for voluntary organisations
- Create a long term funding strategy
- Provide IT training
- Assist with marketing and PR
- Advise voluntary organisations in matters of contractual agreement

Employer supported volunteers can:

- Provide a new and fresh perspective for community organisations
- Lay the ground for longer term partnerships between companies and the voluntary sector
- Increase the awareness of community issues among the employer's staff employees and among the general public

3.5 Benefits to the employee

There are many benefits to the employee for involvement in a volunteering programme;

- A chance to develop personal skills such as time management, communication and presentation skills
- An opportunity to work in a completely new environment and develop transferable skills
- The chance to meet and work with people from other departments
- An extra dimension to life by providing new experiences outside the usual work and social environment
- The opportunity to contribute to an issue they really care about

Evaluations of previous programmes have suggested that employees particularly benefit from enhanced communication, coaching, listening and teamwork skills. Volunteering can give them an early opportunity to lead projects and have responsibility for motivating others and can be used as a training exercise. Volunteering can expose staff to a much wider range of tasks than that they might normally experience in their day to day work including planning, budgeting, staff and time management together with evaluation of tasks.

Employers are increasingly recognising that these development benefits by enabling individuals to relate why they do in a voluntary capacity to their own professional development.

3.6 Benefits to the employer

Those involved in the community realise that by supporting employer supported volunteering their organisation can enjoy real benefits which make them stronger and more competitive. Organisations need a highly skilled and motivated workforce, with less emphasis on technical skills and more on team working, interpersonal skills and flexibility – all of which are amply provided by many volunteering projects.

Employer supported volunteering can help an organisations;

- Reputation and credibility
- Recruitment and staff retention
- Staff morale and overall work performance
- Training and development
- Change management

3.7 Training and Development

People are the most important resource employers have. This resource can be built through a wide range of community investment activities that can be matched against training and development needs. Employer supported volunteering can complement existing training and development programmes, with the added dimension of a real-life situation which traditional courses cannot provide. In an unfamiliar situation, employees can be stimulated into creative thinking and problem solving and encouraged into real learning. They are required to use their initiative and take on new responsibilities, building their confidence and self esteem.

Surveys have shown that employer supported volunteering is useful in changing perspectives and developing attitudinal differences in the following areas:

- Increased understanding of co workers and respect for diversity
- More innovative approach in responding to difficulties
- Enlarged sense of community and social obligation
- Heightened appreciation of benefits provided by their team
- Affirmation of personal capability and worth
- Positive resistance to feelings of isolation and alienation

3.8 Insurance

If you are volunteering as part of the employee-volunteering scheme you will be covered by Winchester City Council's insurance policy. You may need to undertake additional Health and Safety training or the Criminal Records Disclosure process, dependent on the type of volunteering being undertaken.

Whilst the Council may endorse the chosen volunteering activities of staff, it cannot accept responsibility for insuring them when engaged on activities within the local

community, outside of the Council premises. Individuals must therefore ensure that they are adequately covered by their chosen voluntary organisation.

3.9 Health and Safety

Staff involved in charitable and voluntary work are afforded very similar protection under health and safety legislation as employees, agency and contract staff. The Health and Safety Executive has issued guidance HSG192 Charity and Voluntary Workers, A Guide to Health & Safety at Work.

Employees taking advantage of this scheme are technically still in the employ of the City Council although working on a non council premises or land and under the jurisdiction of another body or organisation. The line manager will liaise with the organisation or project leader in question to ensure that risk assessments have been carried out to identify and effectively manage any significant risks related to the task, project or activity which is to be undertaken.

3.10 Sanctions

Time approved and given to allow staff to be involved with voluntary work or projects must be used for this purpose only. If it is found that staff are abusing this policy it may result in disciplinary action in accordance with the Councils Disciplinary Process.

4. MONITOR AND REVIEW

The Employer Supported Volunteering policy will be reviewed once per year by the Head of Organisational Development.

EMPLOYER SUPPORTED VOLUNTEERING AGREEMENT

NAME: _____

DEPARTMENT/DIVISION: _____

PLACEMENT: _____

DATES & DURATION OF PLACEMENT: _____

Winchester City Council recognised the many benefits of employee volunteering, both to individuals and to the community.

The Council has committed to Employee Volunteering and supports its staff to work within the local community both in their own time and as an employee of Winchester City Council where a training and/or development need can be addressed.

There are two ways of engaging with voluntary work:

- Work with local communities in Winchester City Council's time with the intention of improving understanding between WCC and the local community whilst the individual learns
- Work within a WCC volunteering group towards a specific project

Time

Winchester City Council will allocate up to a maximum of 3 working days per financial year per employee (this will be pro rata for part time staff) for volunteering purposes. The request must be approved in advance of the placement and is at the managers discretion. Although WCC want to encourage staff to be involved in volunteering projects it does recognise that this has to be balanced with operational needs within the business.

The request must be approved by your line manager and then signed off by your Head of Division prior to your placement commencing.

Insurance

If you are volunteering as part of the employee volunteering scheme, you will be covered by Winchester City Council's insurance policy. You may also be required to undertake additional Health and Safety training or the Criminal Records Disclosure process dependant on the type of volunteering to be undertaken.

Whilst the Council may endorse the chosen volunteering activities of staff, it cannot accept responsibility for insuring them when engaged on activities, as defined, under Type 1, outside

of its premises. Individuals must therefore ensure that they are adequately covered by their chosen voluntary organisation prior to commencing any placement.

I confirm that I will abide by the conditions of the volunteering arrangements as stated above and will ensure that I keep accurate records for audit purposes.

Signed

Dated.....