

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

1.	Meeting:	Cabinet Meeting
2.	Date:	30th April 2014
3.	Title:	Use of Volunteers within RMBC
4.	Directorate:	Resources

5. Summary

As the Council faces continued budget pressures with inevitable implications for levels of service delivery, the use of volunteers presents the opportunity to utilise skills of community members to improve the environment in which they live and the services that they and their families access.

The use of volunteers is not intended to replace existing or former employees but instead to enhance services and encourage citizens to take an active part in the life of the Borough.

6. Recommendations

6.1 That Cabinet support opportunities for volunteering across the Borough.

6.2 Join with Gateshead Council in supporting a National Volunteers Month in June 2014 and promote volunteering opportunities at this time.

7.1 Background

As part of the work of the Deprived Neighbourhoods strategic group, Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) have offered their support to assist the Council to further develop opportunities for volunteering.

A survey of Council managers has highlighted the positive input that volunteers already make to a range of services. Just some illustrative examples (by no means all) of areas where use is made of volunteers include:

Children and Young People's Services

*Youth Work Support
Independent Visitors
Assistance at Children's Centre's*

Environment and Development Services

*Clifton Park Horticultural Volunteers
Rother Valley Country Park Volunteers
Countryside Volunteers
Heritage Volunteers
Library Volunteers
Theatre Assistants
Streetpride Champions (Eyes and Ears reporting role in local communities)*

Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

*Friends of Lord Hardy Court (Activity Organisers)
Customer Inspection Team
Quality Standards Challenge Group
Speak Up Mystery Shoppers
Oaks Day Centre Theatre Group*

Managers in these services were generally positive about expanding the use of volunteers in these areas and some additional examples of how volunteers could potentially be used elsewhere were given.

In addition to traditional forms of volunteering, mutual benefit for both the council and students exist in promoting work placements for those in statutory and higher education. Across the council there are some good examples of students having undertaken beneficial pieces of work which have enhanced existing service, but would not have been undertaken without this additional resource.

A further and related strand of activity is the significant work being undertaken on offering work placements to disabled people, the long term unemployed, Young People and Looked After Children. Since April 2013 around 112 work

placements have been undertaken by individuals from these groups in a variety of services across the Council.

The benefits of volunteering include:

- Utilising talent within our communities to enhance service delivery
- Helping people to help themselves and involve more members of the community directly with the services they receive
- Enabling people to participate and increase the sense of civic pride by supporting fellow community members and the Borough as a whole
- Increasing diversity within the organisation
- Enhancing the skills and employability of individuals who volunteer including unemployed people
- Bringing in new perspectives and those of service users that can positively influence service delivery

Working with the VAR's volunteer centre the opportunity exists to utilise their expertise and links to more widely cascade volunteering opportunities. The Volunteer Centre promotes volunteering opportunities in Rotherham via the national 'Do It' website.

The Volunteer Centre are prepared to act as a clearing house to receive adverts for volunteering opportunities and offer advice on editing such adverts where appropriate. They would then post the advert on the Do It website and distribute application forms on request. Application forms could either be collated by the Volunteer Centre or sent directly back to the service seeking volunteers.

The Volunteer Centre/Do It website will be able to provide management data on the type and number of volunteer opportunities advertised and applications received but managers will need to maintain records of applications received and volunteers appointed.

The Council's offer on volunteering could be enhanced by availability of information on the Council's own website, for instance giving a broad overview of the valuable resource that volunteering can provide and linking to the Do It website and current Rotherham Council opportunities.

VAR can provide assistance with the development of volunteer role templates which could be used and adapted by Council managers to suit the circumstances under which volunteers would operate in their service. Guidance for Managers on the use of volunteers currently exists and is accessible via the HR pages of the intranet. Human Resources are reviewing this guidance and will refresh as appropriate.

In addition to volunteering opportunities that are directly managed by the Council, there are significant opportunities to work with community, voluntary or faith groups to promote local activity which supports and enhances Council service delivery. For example, Housing and Neighbourhoods Services In dialogue with Streepride, have developed a community grant programme

administered by Rotherfed, designed to foster and reward community activity which provides local environmental benefit.

Gateshead Council is writing to all Councils seeking support for a National Volunteers Month in June 2014. Joining in Gateshead's campaign would offer a focus for using that month to promote existing volunteering opportunities and new opportunities that Services may wish to offer. A copy of the letter sent by Gateshead Council promoting their initiative is attached at appendix 1.

8. Finance

To avoid additional financial costs associated with the management of volunteers it would be necessary for managers and supervisors to absorb this role as part of their day to activity in managing their service.

Dependent on the volunteer role / host service there may be a need to provide personal protective equipment (PPE) eg safety boots and/or arrange for a Disclosure and Barring Service check at the appropriate level. Direct costs of such equipment and checks would need to be factored in by any service considering the use of volunteers.

Should it be agreed to reimburse volunteers for certain expenses incurred, for example travel expenses, services will need to budget for this provision from within their available financial resources. As per current advice, any expenses should accord with current Council rates and be accompanied with appropriate receipts.

The cost of the community grants programme is limited to £10,000 in 2014/15

9. Risks and Uncertainties

Given the current activity to address on-going budget deficits, increasing the use of volunteers may be perceived as a means of replacing paid employees. In reality volunteering will work best as means to augment service delivery rather than replace it.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Volunteering potentially supports all of the new corporate priorities:

- Stimulating the local economy & helping local people into work
- Protecting our most vulnerable people & families, enabling them to maximise their independence
- Ensuring all areas of Rotherham are safe, clean and well maintained
- Helping people to improve their health & wellbeing & reducing inequalities within the Borough

Specifically it supports the way we work theme of:

- Help people to help themselves wherever possible

11. Background Papers and Consultation

- a) Meetings of the Deprived Neighbourhoods Strategic Group
- b) Strategic Leadership Team 31st March 2014
- c) Joint Consultative Committee 11th April 2014

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