

**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Personnel Committee – 13 September 2017
Subject: Employer Supported Volunteering
Report of: Director of HROD

Summary

This report presents a revised Employer Supported Volunteering Policy and sets out proposals to promote volunteering across the workforce in support of the People Strategy commitment to provide more opportunities to connect the workforce to the life of the City.

The proposed approach will replace the previous policy agreed in 2002. The policy provides employees with three days paid leave per year to undertake volunteering activities which contribute to their personal development and the objectives of the Council.

The policy also sets out and confirms the organisation's broader policy commitment in relation to public service volunteering more broadly as well as overseeing volunteers working within the Council.

Recommendations

The Committee is asked to approve the introduction of the new Employer Supported Volunteering Policy appended to this report (Appendix A).

Wards affected:

All

Financial considerations – Revenue:

None

Financial considerations – Capital:

None

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Implications for:

Anti Poverty
Yes

Equal Opportunities
Yes

Environment
Yes

Employment
Yes

Background documents (available for public inspection):

None

1.0 Background & Context

- 1.1 The current Employer Supported Volunteering Policy was launched in 2002 following the success of volunteering at the Commonwealth Games and entitles employees to one days paid special leave to undertake volunteering. A revision was made as a one-off for the 2012 Olympic Games which provided two days to attend as a volunteer.
- 1.2 There is strong evidence to show that volunteering has a beneficial impact on the economy and wider society as well as to the recipients of support and for the volunteer themselves. The recipients, whether charities, public sector bodies or community groups, gain skills, advice and expertise whilst employees gain development opportunities, a sense of 'giving something back' to the City and build relationships and connections with the voluntary and community sector and across neighbourhoods. In return, volunteering can help enhance the workforce's understanding of communities and support our broader Organisation Development strategy.
- 1.3 A revision to the Council's policy and offer is needed to bring this approach up to date. The revised policy seeks to align the Council's approach as a positive measure to support Our Manchester and the People Strategy through providing employees with an opportunity to engage with the life of the City outside of their day-jobs and identifying opportunities which align their skills to areas of support identified by our communities. It will also support the Council's Social Value objectives which include promoting participation and citizen engagement and building the capacity and sustainability of the voluntary and community sector. Corporately five target groups have been identified as the focus for our social value activity and specific opportunities will be identified and encouraged in support of these groups:
- Children and young people and specifically;
 1. Looked after Children and Care Leavers,
 2. Young people who are NEET, or are at risk of becoming NEET
 3. Children involved in, or at risk of becoming involved in, the criminal justice system
 4. Young people who have to overcome additional barriers to secure and sustain a place in the labour market
 - Long-termed unemployed with an underlying health condition and/or complex needs
 - People with a disability
 - Older people, specifically adults over 50 who are economically inactive and/or in poor health;
 - Vulnerable adults overcoming a crisis e.g. domestic violence and abuse survivors, dependency on drugs or alcohol; rough sleepers.
- 1.4 The revised policy provides an opportunity for the Council to take a positive step to strengthen its approach to volunteering. In doing so, it is important to recognise that many of our employees already volunteer and contribute to the City through a range of activities both inside and outside of work.

2.0 Approach

- 2.1 Following a benchmarking exercise across local and national comparators the proposal is to increase the number of paid special leave days available to staff to undertake volunteering activity from one to three.
- 2.2 To make sure that volunteer activities provide employees and communities with clear benefits a set of three broad criteria have been developed. For staff to access paid leave for the purposes of volunteering the activity must:
- Contribute to an individual's personal development
 - Support Manchester through contributing to the objectives of the Our Manchester Strategy and/or supporting our social value priorities (as outlined above)
 - Benefit the organisation, either directly or by building the knowledge and experience of the workforce.
- 2.3 The policy also promotes team volunteering aligned to the above criteria and a range of opportunities for this are also being identified.
- 2.4 For employees that wish to volunteer but do not have a specific activity in mind an online platform is being made available to match skills and interests to community need. This platform will be populated with opportunities identified by the Council's third sector partners and Neighbourhood Teams.
- 2.5 For the remainder of the 2016/17 leave year employees will be allocated up to 1.5 days of leave for volunteering (pro rata).
- 2.6 The policy places the responsibility for approving volunteering leave with line managers. It sets a clear expectation that all reasonable volunteering requests which meet the criteria and can be managed in the context of operational demand will be approved.
- 2.7 The take-up and impact of the policy will be evaluated through feedback surveys, discussions with volunteers, and data on activities completed. This information will, in turn be used to improve our volunteer offer and develop positive case studies for the future promotion of volunteering. Managers will also be encouraged to discuss volunteering and recognise its contribution to personal growth and the City through their regular About You conversations with staff. (About You is the Council's approach to regular conversations between managers and their staff which covers areas like objective setting and monitoring, personal development and performance management).
- 2.8 In addition to the provisions of the new policy in relation to special leave for volunteering, existing provision related to broader public service voluntary activity are confirmed such as service as a School Governor or Reservist. On the whole the policy simply confirms current arrangements which are in line with statutory provision. However, there are two amendments:
- Support to Special Constables and retained firefighters is included and aligned with the provision for Reservists. (currently no provision exists)

- Our support to emergency planning volunteers is strengthened from the provision of unpaid time off in lieu (TOIL) to paid TOIL.

2.9 In addition to the revised employee policy and approach in relation to Council staff volunteering, work is underway to establish a corporate framework for managing volunteer opportunities provided within the Council itself. The aim is to provide a platform where services can access all volunteers registered with the Council, which will also allow volunteers to access all of the Council opportunities which are available. The appended policy provides a clear framework of roles and responsibilities in support of this.

2.10 A strong launch which highlights the policy provision and how volunteering more broadly can connect the workforce to our communities and support individual wellbeing and development will be undertaken in early October. The aim of this activity will be to maximise the reach and uptake of the new provision.

3.0 Key Policies and Considerations

(a) Equal Opportunities

None. Support will be offered to disabled employees who wish to volunteer in both identifying opportunities and accessing them.

(b) Risk Management

Employees and line managers will be required to ensure that the volunteering organisation has the appropriate liability insurance in place with the volunteering organisation holding liability during the volunteering work.

The policy makes clear that employees are bound by the Council's Employee Code of Conduct when undertaking volunteering.

(c) Legal Considerations

None

4.0 Trade Union Comments

To follow

5.0 Comments of the Director of HROD

5.1 The proposed new policy provides an important opportunity to demonstrate our organisational commitment to Our Manchester and Social Value. It also directly responds to staff feedback and comments through the BHeard Survey. The provision of a broad framework which provides opportunities aligned to community need whilst also allowing individuals to identify their own opportunities also supports Our Manchester.

- 5.2 The proposed entitlement is in-line with benchmarking, and the process and evaluation approach set-out seek to maximise individual and organisational benefit.

Appendix A: Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

Policy on Employer Supported Volunteering

**Issued by:
HR/OD
August 2017**

Document Control

Title	Policy on Employer Supported Volunteering
Document Type	Policy
Author/Owner	HR/OD
Subject	Arrangements to support employees who wish to take volunteering leave
Created Date	August 2017
Approval Date	September 2017
Approval By	Personnel Committee
Review due	September 2020 (or earlier where there is a change in the applicable law or an organisation which affects this Policy).

1 Purpose

2 Scope

3 Individual Volunteering

4 Time Available

5 Team Volunteering

6 Applying for leave

7 Volunteers in the workforce

8 Responsibilities

9 Legal considerations

1 Purpose

In support of the Our Manchester strategy and the Council's Social Value commitment, the Council encourages organisations to promote employee volunteering activities which benefit both our communities and employees themselves. Leading by example, we will provide the tools and support necessary for our employees to pursue volunteering opportunities - working with residents and partners to establish and highlight activities which support our goals.

In addition to the valuable contribution volunteering provides our communities it also gives employees a chance to have new experiences. This can help to develop skills, support wellbeing and provide a valuable insight into our communities which can be brought back into the workplace.

This policy provides the information for those who wish to take paid volunteer leave. Additionally, managers are encouraged to support employees who volunteer outside of work (and outside of the scope of this policy), acknowledging the positive contribution this can have on our communities and their individual development.

2 Scope

This policy applies to Council employees who are not directly employed by schools. It enables employees to take paid time off to undertake volunteering during their normal working hours but it cannot be used to 'claim back' any time spent volunteering outside of these hours.

Voluntary activity can be defined as:

'any activity that involves spending time[...] doing something that aims to benefit the environment or someone (individuals or groups) other than, or in addition to, close relatives' ([National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#)).

Central to this definition is that volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Whilst employees will be in receipt of their contractual pay when volunteering (in line with this policy), they must not receive payment (apart from claiming expenses) from the organisation where they choose to volunteer.

The Council recognises the benefit of giving time to help local communities and Manchester as a whole. Employees can receive time off in addition to the main provisions of this policy for certain public service activities. Provisions will (at a minimum) be in line with statutory requirements when employees volunteer for public duties with the detail agreed by line managers. Such opportunities include:

- School governor responsibilities - employees will be granted leave of a half day per term (3 terms per year) with pay.
- Member of another local authority - paid time off to undertake duties will be granted up to a maximum of 208 hours per financial year.
- Service in non-regular forces (reservists) - employees who are reservists will be able to take two weeks of additional paid leave per year to allow them to attend the annual training camp.

- Magistrate responsibilities - employees can take up to 18 days with pay for magisterial duties, employees will also be allowed an additional 4 days for their induction training.
- Special Constables - upto 10 days paid leave will be granted for training that cannot be taken outside of working time.
- Retained Firefighters - as per Special Constables.
- Regulation 44 visitors - employees who volunteer as an independent visitor will be released from their duties during planned visits during working time, for any time volunteered outside of work paid TOIL will be provided.
- Emergency Planning Volunteers - will be entitled to take paid time off in lieu (TOIL) for any hours volunteered as part of the emergency planning team.

Further information on the allowances provided for those who volunteer for Public Services can be found on the [Human Resources](#) intranet site.

3 Individual Volunteering

Volunteering leave must meet the three broad criteria set out below. When requesting paid volunteer leave employees must ensure these criteria are met before applying:

The volunteering opportunity must:

- contribute to an individual's personal development
- support Manchester through contributing to the objectives of the Our Manchester Strategy and/or supporting our social value priorities
- benefit the organisation, either directly or by building the knowledge and experience of the workforce.

Volunteering activity will normally take place within the City of Manchester.

Individual volunteering can cover a number of activities such as care work, conservation projects and fundraising. Opportunities do not necessarily need to be related to an employee's current role or skills, they can be a chance to try something new. Alternatively, employees may want to put their expertise to use (for example those from ICT, Legal) to help those who may not usually have access to specialist skills.

Individuals are encouraged to find volunteering activities for themselves and we will also use internal communications to highlight opportunities available.

Any expenses (e.g. travel/equipment costs) to be claimed as a result of volunteering must be agreed and raised with the 'host' organisation, the Council will not reimburse any expenses incurred. However, employees will be allowed reasonable access to Council resources e.g. printing and stationery to support their approved volunteering activity.

4 Time Available

Three days paid leave per year is available to undertake volunteering work - so if you work a 35 hour week over five days, you can take 21 hours as volunteer leave each

year.

Any leave not taken cannot be carried over, exchanged or used against anything other than volunteer work. This leave can be taken in blocks of full or half days which, if required, can be taken all together. If less than half a day is needed then the employee must return to work when they have finished and a half day will be deducted from their volunteer leave entitlement.

5 Team Volunteering

Teams may wish to volunteer together to assist their team development whilst contributing to projects or activities across the City. Team volunteering should also fulfil the [three criteria](#) and can be approved at the discretion of the Head of Service, taking account of organisational and service priorities.

6 Applying for leave

Approval for leave rests with line managers. Before submitting any request this must be discussed with your line manager, detailing how the opportunity meets the [criteria](#).

Reasonable requests for volunteer leave that meet the criteria will be approved. However, the request could be declined if:

- there are health and safety concerns
- the criteria are not met clearly e.g. no apparent benefit to the organisation and/or individual
- there are concerns of the impact on the delivery of team/service objectives; or
- there is a potential conflict of interest with your role or the Council's interests e.g. political campaigning.

If an individual feels that their request has been rejected wrongly then they can ask for a review by outlining their reasons in writing and sending this to the manager of their manager within 10 working days. Following this review there will be no further right of appeal.

7 Volunteers in the workforce

As well as our employees volunteering in the community we recognise the benefit of local residents volunteering within our organisation. This can provide individuals with a greater understanding of the work the Council does, helps develop their skills, improve confidence and build relationships within their community.

When offering volunteer opportunities the Head of Service and line manager of the team (where the opportunity will be hosted) need to establish if volunteers need an appropriate safeguarding check (i.e. DBS), determine what training may be required and identify any Health and Safety issues. A named employee must have oversight of any volunteers during their time undertaking activity for the Council. Further support and information regarding recruitment to volunteer opportunities within the

Council can be found on the Human Resources intranet site.

8 Responsibilities

Employees are trusted to use this time for its purpose, any suspected instances of misuse will be investigated in accordance with the Council's disciplinary procedures. As representatives of the Council their actions will directly reflect on the organisation. As a result, all employees must act in line with the [Employee Code of Conduct](#), whilst using volunteering leave. Any concerns with an employee's conduct whilst volunteering will be investigated in line with the relevant Council disciplinary procedures.

It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that the employee has considered and accepted any risks associated with the proposed volunteering activity - the Council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering. It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the host organisation has its own Public Liability Insurance in place as required. The host organisation is responsible for ensuring any required safeguarding checks are processed and in place prior to the start of the volunteering activity.

9 Legal considerations

Volunteers do not have the same rights as an employee or worker; they may have a volunteer agreement provided to them which explains:

- the level of supervision and support offered
- what training will be received
- whether a volunteer is covered under the organisation's insurance
- health and safety issues, and
- any expenses the organisation will cover.

The volunteer agreement is not compulsory, although it may set out what is expected it does not form a contract between the volunteer and the organisation. As a result, volunteers are not covered by employment legislation but, as members of the public, they are covered by relevant legislation such as health and safety and data protection laws.

Concerns that volunteers may have in relation to the governance of the organisation, health and safety, data protection or harassment can be referred to external agencies. The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) has further information on [volunteers' legal status](#).

