

Volunteering Policy



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1. Introduction

- 1.1 Chelmsford City Council recognise the contribution that volunteers make to the community and are committed to providing opportunities for members of staff to engage in volunteering activities that will benefit the residents of the city and support the Council's community leadership role.
- 1.2 Volunteering also provides opportunities for employees to contribute to their local community and in doing so, build relationships, increase confidence and acquire new skills which will benefit them, their team, and their community.
- 1.3 The purpose of this policy and procedure is to outline the Council's approach to employee volunteering and the procedure that managers and employees need to follow to agree time off for volunteering.

2. Scope

- 2.1 This policy and procedure applies to all employees of the Council on successful completion of their probationary period.

3. Definitions

- 3.1 The meaning of some key words and phrases, for the purposes of this policy, are explained below:

Volunteering: any activity that involves spending time, without payment, doing something that aims to benefit individuals (other than close relatives), groups or the environment.

For the purposes of this policy and procedure volunteering will include regular activity at a voluntary organisation or supporting a one-off, specific event which benefits the community.

Volunteer organisation: a registered charity or other not for profit organisation that benefits the community.

For the purposes of this policy and procedure a volunteer organisation may include schools, hospitals or other caring/community based organisations where the work being undertaken is not paid employment.

4. Responsibilities

4.1 Employees are responsible for:

- identifying appropriate volunteering opportunities and for requesting time off in writing to their manager using the Employee Volunteering form.
- ensuring that they adhere to the Council's policies and procedures including Codes of Conduct when undertaking voluntary activities. This includes notifying the volunteer organisation and their manager and terminating the arrangement if they believe the activity may represent a conflict of interest.
- satisfying themselves that the volunteer organisation has in place its own public and employers liability insurance.

4.2 Managers are responsible for complying with the requirements of this policy and procedure and for ensuring that employees are aware of their responsibilities.

5. Time allowed for volunteering

5.1 Employees can request a maximum of 2 days or 15 hours unpaid time away from work during any 12 month period for volunteering activities that will be of benefit to the residents of Chelmsford City (pro rata for part time employees).

5.2 The time may be taken as a whole block or spread across the year but must be a minimum of a half day (3.75 hours) per request.

5.3 Where travel to and/or from the activity occurs within the employee's normal working hours this will also count towards the 2 days or 15 hours allowed.

5.4 Time off for volunteering is in addition to other time off allowed for public duties e.g. jury service, school governor, magistrate, reservist, trade union activities, special constables.

5.5 Should an employee wish to undertake volunteering for more than 2 days per year they may request additional leave in the normal way e.g. annual leave,

5.6 Please note that time cannot be taken in lieu of volunteering undertaken during normal leisure time.

5.7 In times of emergency the Council may ask staff to volunteer to help in the community to support affected individuals e.g. fire, floods, clinical emergencies. This does not count towards the 2 days employee volunteering.

6. Travel and associated costs

- 6.1 Travel costs will not be reimbursed by the Council however the voluntary organisation may reimburse reasonable out of pocket expenses, brought about through the employees volunteering.

7. Training, checks and insurance

- 7.1 Employees who will be working with children and/or vulnerable adults will require a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before commencing any voluntary work. This will be the responsibility of the volunteer organisation to arrange although, with their permission, the Council can carry out the check as an 'umbrella body'.
- 7.2 Whilst the Council encourages employees to undertake volunteering activities, we cannot accept responsibility for insuring employees when engaged on activities with other organisations. Individuals must therefore ensure that they are adequately covered by their chosen voluntary organisation.

8. Procedure

- 8.1 An employee who has identified a volunteering opportunity should complete an Employee Volunteering Request Form and send it to their line manager to authorise, giving a minimum of 4 weeks' notice.
- 8.2 The form should include the name of the volunteer organisation and its purpose, the nature of the volunteering work to be undertaken and the dates and time required. The employee must also attach a letter from the volunteering organisation confirming the arrangements.
- 8.3 If the employee intends to take 2 days off in one block they only need to complete the form once. If the employee wishes to split the two days over separate activities they should complete a form for each activity, giving a minimum of 4 weeks' notice on each occasion.
- 8.4 The line manager will consider the application, check that the request complies with the requirements of the volunteering policy and confirm the decision to agree or refuse the request, seeking further information from the employee first, if required.

8.5 When authorising volunteering activities managers must be satisfied that:

- the employee has provided evidence (for example a letter from the volunteering organisation) that the activity being undertaken will be of benefit to residents of Chelmsford City and confirming the volunteering arrangements.
- the employee is not receiving payment for time worked
- there is no conflict of interest with the employee's work (or with the council in general)
- that the time allocated will not disrupt or adversely affect service delivery
- the activity is not part of normal work responsibilities and duties
- the activity will not bring the Council into disrepute

8.6 If the request is refused, the reason(s) will be discussed with the employee and recorded on the form. Reasons for refusal may include (but are not limited to) impact on service delivery, insufficient notice, or lack of cover.

8.7 The completed Employee Volunteering form should be sent to the HR Support Team so that this can be put on the employee's personal file. A copy will be given to payroll so that they can make any necessary adjustments to the employee's pay.

8.8 If an employee is unable to attend their volunteering activity due to sickness or an unforeseen event, they should inform the volunteer organisation and their line manager as soon as possible following Council policy reporting requirements as appropriate. If the employee is unable to attend their voluntary activity due to sickness the time will not be deducted from their volunteer hours 'allowance'.

9. Compliance

9.1 Failure to follow this policy and procedure may impact on good employee relations and the reputation of the Council as a good employer. Therefore, appropriate action will be taken for employees who fail to follow this procedure.

9.2 Any employee found to have falsely requested time off for volunteering activities or who act in an inappropriate way whilst carrying out volunteering activities may be subject to disciplinary action.

9.3 If an employee considers themselves to have been treated unfairly they should initially raise this informally with their manager. If this is not appropriate or does not result in a satisfactory outcome, they should raise it formally by making use of the Council's Grievance Policy.

Evaluation Form – Staff Volunteering

Employee name:

Name of voluntary organisation:

Number of days or hours you volunteered for:

Describe the voluntary activity you undertook?

How did you find the voluntary activity?

How have you benefitted from the activity?

| | YES | NO |
|---|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Have you volunteered for this organisation previously? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Would you recommend this activity to others? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Will you be doing any more volunteering for this organisation? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you think you will use your 2 paid volunteering days next year? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Would you be happy to help the Council publicise the staff volunteering days? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Do you think any changes need to be made to the staff volunteering policy? | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

Comment from voluntary organisation (optional)

