

Folkestone & Hythe District Council

Employer Supported Volunteering Policy

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The council recognises the positive contribution that volunteers can make to communities and is keen to encourage its employees to engage in voluntary service which will help the council build stronger links between the authority, its employees and the local community.
- 1.2 In addition to the valuable contribution volunteering provides to our community it also gives employees a chance to have new experiences which can help develop skills and relationships, support wellbeing and provide valuable insights into our community which can be brought back in to the workplace.
- 1.3 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 community.

2 Scope

- 2.1 This policy applies to all employees of Folkestone & Hythe District Council, with the exception of casual and zero hours workers, and enables employees to take paid time off to undertake volunteering during their normal working hours.
- 2.2 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).
- 2.3 Volunteering must be a choice freely made by each individual. Whilst employees will be in receipt of their contractual pay when volunteering, they must not receive payment (apart from potentially claiming expenses) from the organisation where they choose to volunteer.
- 2.4 The council recognises the benefit of giving time to help local communities. 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 can include:
 - **School governor responsibilities** – employees will be granted leave of a half day per term (3 terms per year) with pay.
 - **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 or similar activity.

- **Magistrate responsibilities, including youth offender panels** – employees can take up to 18 days with pay for magisterial duties, with an additional 4 days for their induction training.
- **Special constables & retained firefighters** – up to 10 days paid leave will be granted for training that cannot be taken outside of working time.

3. Individual Volunteering Activities

- 3.1 Volunteering activity will normally take place within the Folkestone & Hythe District. Volunteering outside of the district under this policy will only be considered on an exceptional basis with approval from the Chief Executive.
- 3.2 Individual volunteering can cover a number of activities such as care work, conservation projects and fundraising. The 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 use their expertise to help those who may not usually have access to specialist skills.
- 3.3 Individuals are encouraged to identify volunteering activities for themselves however we will also use internal communications to highlight any opportunities that we are made aware of.
- 3.4 Any expenses (e.g. travel) to be claimed as a result of the volunteering must be agreed and raised with the volunteer organisation. The council will not reimburse any expenses incurred, however reasonable access to council resources (e.g. mobile phone) will be allowed.
- 3.5 Should a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check be required for the voluntary role, this will be the responsibility of the host organisation.

4. Time Allowance

- 4.1 Up to two days paid leave per year is available to undertake volunteering work, pro rata for part time employees.
- 4.2 Volunteer leave can be used flexibly, for example half a day at a time. There is no requirement to use the 2 days at the same time, nor for the same activity / host organisation.
- 4.3 On occasion, the council may invite employees to volunteer at local events, for example marshalling an event. In these circumstances, separate application processes will apply and the time granted will be determined on a case by case basis by the Corporate Leadership Team in conjunction with the Chief HR Officer.

5. Team Volunteering

- 5.1 Teams may wish to volunteer together to assist their team development whilst contributing to projects or activities within the district. Activities should last for a maximum of one day and be suitable for all team members to participate in.

6. Applying for Leave

- 6.1 Approval for leave rests with line managers. Before submitting any request this must be discussed with your line manager.
- 6.2 When submitting an application for volunteering, the employee will need to confirm:
- Details of the host organisation;
 - The nature of the activities that the employee will undertake;
 - The times / dates that the employee is proposing to volunteer; and
 - Whether a change to their working pattern is being requested (and if so, the details of the change).

Proof of the volunteering activity may be requested.

- 6.3 Reasonable requests for volunteer leave will be approved, however the request could be declined if:
- There are health & safety concerns;
 - There are concerns of the impact on the delivery of the council's team / service objective or business need at the time of the volunteering activity; or
 - There is a potential conflict of interest with your role or the Council's interests e.g. political campaigning.

Line managers must ensure that HR are aware of agreed volunteering requests.

- 6.4 If an employee 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 their line manager's manager. Following this review there will be no further right of appeal.

7. Responsibilities

- 7.1 Employees are trusted to use this time for its intended 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. Therefore, 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 also be investigated in line with the Council's disciplinary procedures.

- 7.2 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.
- 7.3 It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the host organisation has its own Public Liability Insurance in place. Employees must abide by the health and safety procedures for the host organisation.

Document Control			
Date effective from	February 2021	Owner	Chief HR Officer
Approval Date	4 February 2021	Approval By	Personnel Committee
Review Date	First review to take place in April 2022 and then every three years (or earlier where there is a change in the applicable law)		

Version Control			
Version	Type of Change	Date	Revisions from previous issues
1.0	New Policy	Jan 2021	First version of a new policy