

ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE	Staff Governance Committee
DATE	18 November 2024
EXEMPT	No
CONFIDENTIAL	No
REPORT TITLE	Volunteers Policy
REPORT NUMBER	CORS/24/294
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR	Andy MacDonald
CHIEF OFFICER	Isla Newcombe
REPORT AUTHOR	Luci Camilli
TERMS OF REFERENCE	2.5

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report has been prepared to update Committee on the progress in relation to the Volunteer project and seek approval for a new Volunteers policy which will set out how any volunteering activity for Aberdeen City Council (ACC) will be managed to ensure uniformity of processes and to mitigate against any potential risks to the Council through the use of volunteers.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Committee:

- 2.1 note the content of the report and the progress made to date with the Volunteer Project; and
- 2.2 approve the Volunteers Policy for implementation with effect from 1 December 2024.

3. CURRENT SITUATION

3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 Aberdeen City Council's (ACCs) vision is for Aberdeen as a place where all people can prosper. This means all people being able to access our services, regardless of their background and circumstances, so that we help all people, families, businesses and communities to do well, succeed and flourish in every aspect.
- 3.1.2 The Council previously implemented the Education, Culture & Sport Volunteer Policy 2013 and Making a Difference: Volunteering in Aberdeen Strategy 2013-2015.
- 3.1.3 In 2021 a project group led by the Chief Officer – Early Intervention and Community Empowerment was established with representatives from across the Council to identify the current volunteering opportunities offered and

practices undertaken. The project group began drafting a Volunteers Policy for volunteers from the community who are managed and supported by an ACC manager (for example Libraries and Museums and Galleries). The group had identified that there would be separate policies for employees who volunteer and Community Resilience Groups who correspond with a named ACC manager (for example Corporate Companies and Local Community Groups).

3.1.4 In May 2023 the project group re-established to progress the Volunteer Policy with the focus initially to gather data on the clusters who provide volunteering opportunities. The data obtained identified that there are volunteers utilised across various services within the Council with the majority being members of the public. Volunteering is undertaken on a regular basis in Education establishments, Libraries, Emergency Planning and Resilience, Archives, Galleries and Museums, Environmental Services and Data Insights.

3.1.5 In October 2023, an internal audit review ‘Assurance Review of Volunteer Arrangements’ was conducted on the volunteer arrangements within ACC. The review concluded in March 2024, Audit Report Number AC2420, and identified that policies and procedures differed between clusters and activities, and these were not consolidated at a corporate level to provide a clear framework or process flowchart that could be applied to any potential volunteer to the Council. The audit made a number of recommendations related to these areas, which included:

Development of a corporate volunteer policy	Completed October 2024
Implementing an online application with a single route for potential volunteers to identify, select and apply for volunteering opportunities	This is currently being developed alongside the accompanying Guidance and will be implemented on 1 December 2024 following approval of the Policy.
Identify the circumstances in which Right to Work and PVG / Disclosure documentation are required	Included in the Policy
The requirements for identification badges for volunteers and circumstances in which expenses might be claimed, and the process for approval and payment thereof	Included in the Policy and further details will be in the accompanying Guidance being developed for completion by 30 November 2024.
Guidance on data recording requirements, including time and task recording, and volunteers’ rights in respect of their personal data	Included in the Policy and further details in the accompanying Guidance being developed for completion by 30 November 2024.

Performance and outcomes data should be documented and published in respect of volunteering at individual, cluster, and corporate level	Included in the Policy and further details in the accompanying Guidance being developed for completion by 30 November 2024.
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- 3.1.6 The project group engaged with Trade Unions and Chief Officers/Managers from clusters who offer volunteering opportunities to gain their feedback and support the development of the Volunteers Policy. Benchmarking was also undertaken with other local authorities to consider their policies and guidance for engaging volunteers in rewarding, appropriate and sustainable volunteering activity to support the development of our policy and volunteering arrangements.
- 3.1.7 The meeting of Council in July 2024, approved that ACC would sign up to become a Volunteer Charter Champion, committing to the 10 key principles of the Volunteer Scotland Volunteer Charter, to ensure that volunteers are engaged in rewarding, appropriate and sustainable volunteering activity.
- 3.1.8 Taking account of the internal audit recommendations, benchmarking information from other organisations, data obtained from managers across the organisation who utilise volunteers in their areas, feedback from Trade Unions and Chief Officers, as well as the commitments set out as a Volunteer Scotland Charter Champion, the draft Volunteers Policy from 2021 has been reviewed and updated.
- 3.1.9 The new Volunteers Policy sets out how any volunteering activity within ACC will be managed to ensure uniformity of processes and to mitigate against any potential risks to the Council through the use of volunteers. The policy also ensures compliance with the Volunteer Scotland Charter and that managers uphold best practice in areas such as selecting volunteers and the management of and support to volunteers.
- 3.1.10 The Council recognises that volunteers are involved in appropriate volunteering activities which complement, but never substitute the work of paid employees or the work formerly carried out by paid employees. Benefits gained include building stronger relationships with our communities, opportunities to deliver more effective projects and to learn from volunteers who bring different experiences and knowledge. Undertaking volunteering, enables individuals to develop and broaden their skills for learning, life and employability. Volunteering also provides opportunities to tackle social isolation and improve health and wellbeing.

4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 There are no direct financial implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

5. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 There are no direct legal implications arising from the recommendations of this report.

6. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 The Council utilises volunteers within Environmental Services who assist with Clean Up Aberdeen, Friends Groups and Community Gardening Groups and make a positive impact on the environment by helping keep Aberdeen clean and well maintained with green spaces. This links to the Aberdeen Open Space Strategy, Nature Conservation Strategy and the LOIP “Prosperous Place” outcome with people benefiting from spending time outdoors whilst maintaining the appearance and appreciating the nature of Aberdeen.
- 6.2 Within school establishments in Aberdeen City, there are volunteers who undertake volunteering activities on environmental projects, for example, developing fruit and vegetable allotments. This links to the Keep Beautiful Scotland Eco-Schools initiative which Aberdeen City Council supports through a pupil-led approach to learning for sustainability. The environmental projects undertaken by volunteers in schools also have a positive impact on the environment as the volunteering links to the Nature Conservation and Food Growing strategies.
- 6.3 Where expenses are required to be paid for volunteers’ travel, the volunteer will use public transport (where possible) to help make a positive impact on the environment through the reduction of carbon emissions and achieve Net Zero Emissions by 2045.
- 6.4 As a sustainable food city, Aberdeen City Council has volunteers within the Library and Community Learning service who provide lifestyle choices briefings on growing fruit and vegetables. This links to the Food Growing strategy and the LOIP “Prosperous People (Adults)” outcome by encouraging healthier lifestyles through improved healthy eating behaviours and “Prosperous Place” through the reduction of household waste.

7. RISK

- 7.1 The assessment of risk contained within the table below is considered to be consistent with the Council’s Risk Appetite Statement.

Category	Risks	Primary Controls/Control Actions to achieve Target Risk Level	*Target Risk Level (L, M or H) *taking into account controls/control actions	*Does Target Risk Level Match Appetite Set?
Strategic Risk	No significant risks identified			

<p>Compliance</p>	<p>Engaging a volunteer who is unsuitable to work with children and protected adults</p>	<p>If any volunteering activity involves 1-2-1 contact with children or protected adults, it may be classed as “regulated work” then appropriate checks under the Protection of Vulnerable Groups Scheme (PVG) will be required.</p>	<p>L</p>	<p>Yes</p>
	<p>Data breach of personal information</p>	<p>Where volunteers may have access to personal, including confidential information about others as part of the volunteering activity including information about; employees, children, and members of the public. Services should ensure that access to such information is minimized and that appropriate training in the correct handling of data will be provided to mitigate this risk.</p>		
	<p>The selection of volunteers may not comply with the Equality Act 2010</p>	<p>The volunteers policy is committed to ensuring fair and equal treatment of volunteers, open to all, no matter what their background, age, disability, sex, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion (including belief and non-belief), marriage & civil partnership and sexual orientation. All managers managing and supporting volunteers must have undertaken the online mandatory Equality, Diversity and Inclusion training.</p>		

Operational	Non-compliance of Health and Safety legislation	The volunteers policy will mitigate the risk by ensuring that tasks undertaken by volunteers will be subject to a risk assessment with appropriate safe systems of work put into operation and any necessary training, equipment and PPE provided. All accidents, injuries or near misses will be reported to the Council through the named person.	L	Yes
Financial	No significant risks identified			
Reputational	<p>Engaging a volunteer who is unsuitable to work with children and protected adults or who is not trained in Data Protection</p> <p>Undertaking activities which substitute the work of current paid employees or former employees</p> <p>Exploitation and radicalisation of vulnerable people</p>	<p>To mitigate the risk, all staff who manage volunteers must comply with the terms of the Volunteers policy and the Managing Volunteers guidance to ensure compliance with all essential requirements in using volunteers.</p> <p>Volunteers can undertake appropriate volunteering activities which complement, but never substitute for, the work of current paid employees or the work formerly carried out by paid employees.</p> <p>All ACC employees managing and supporting volunteers must complete the mandatory training courses to ensure they have a clear understanding of their role in preventing the exploitation and</p>	L	Yes

		radicalisation of vulnerable people.		
Environment / Climate	No significant risks identified			

8. OUTCOMES

<u>Council Delivery Plan 2024</u>	
Impact of Report	
<p>Aberdeen City Council Policy Statement</p> <p><u>Working in Partnership for Aberdeen</u></p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of the following aspects of the policy statement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with partners to deliver a just transition to net zero and plan to make Aberdeen a net-zero city by no later than 2037, and earlier if that is possible. • Review current recycling and waste minimisation policies and practices within Council establishments and for flatted accommodation with the objective of reducing waste, increasing recycling levels and improve efficiency of the Council collections. • Work with communities to review the management of council-managed open spaces to create more sustainable and safer green areas and open spaces and develop a Community Environmental Improvement Fund, for communities to access, to implement their own small-scale local environmental improvements. • Recognise the importance of Aberdeen's Green Belt, green spaces and open spaces so they can be enjoyed for purposes of leisure, sport and environmental wellbeing, and investigate the creation of new pocket parks. • Recognise the importance of the third sector in Aberdeen's life and economy and support and work with ACVO. • Increase the amount of land available for community market gardens, orchards and allotments for community food growing and support the expansion of community food pantries. • Support voluntary groups and other partners that help people tackle loneliness and isolation.
<u>Local Outcome Improvement Plan</u>	
<p>Prosperous Economy Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 2 – 74% employment rate for Aberdeen City by 2026. The paper seeks approval of the Volunteers Policy which will help to</p>

	<p>deliver the LOIP Improvement Project Aim ‘Support 25 individuals to gain employability skills through volunteering opportunities by 2026’.</p>
<p>Prosperous People Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 10 – Healthy life expectancy (time lived in good health) is 5 years longer by 2026. The paper seeks approval of the Volunteers Policy to enable the Library and Community Library Service volunteers to continue to provide lifestyle choices briefings on growing fruit and vegetables and encourage adoption of healthier lifestyles through a whole family approach.</p>
<p>Prosperous Place Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 13 – Addressing climate change by reducing Aberdeen’s carbon emissions by at least 61% by 2026 and adapting to the impacts of our climate change. The paper seeks approval of the Volunteers Policy to enable the Library and Community Library Service volunteers to continue to provide lifestyle choices briefings on growing fruit and vegetables and help achieve a reduction in the generation of household waste.</p> <p>The proposals within this report also support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 15 - 26% of Aberdeen’s area will be protected and/or managed for nature and 60% of people report they feel that spaces and buildings are well cared for by 2026. The paper seeks approval of the Volunteers Policy to enable the Environmental Services volunteers to continue to support increasing the diversity, quality and use of Aberdeen’s green spaces to help improve individuals' satisfaction, health and wellbeing.</p>
<p>Community Empowerment Stretch Outcomes</p>	<p>The proposals within this report support the delivery of LOIP Stretch Outcome 16 - 50% of people report they feel able to participate in decisions that help change things for the better by 2026. The paper seeks approval of the Volunteers Policy which will build stronger relationships with our communities, provide opportunities to deliver more effective projects and to learn from volunteers who bring different experiences and knowledge whilst enabling individuals to develop and broaden their skills for learning, life and employability.</p>

9. IMPACT ASSESSMENTS

Assessment	Outcome
Integrated Impact Assessment	New Integrated Impact Assessment has been completed
Data Protection Impact Assessment	Required
Other	N/A

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS

10.1 [Volunteer Charter](#) (Council, 3 July 2024)

10.2 [Internal Audit – Assurance Review of Volunteer Arrangements](#), Report Number AC2420 (28 March 2024)

11. APPENDICES

11.1 Appendix 1 - Volunteers Policy

12. REPORT AUTHOR CONTACT DETAILS

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