

North Yorkshire County Council**Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee****Corporate Volunteer Project Update
Monday 2nd September 2019****1.0 Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Corporate Volunteering project and outline progress made to date.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 An overview on the Corporate Volunteer Project was provided at the Corporate O&S Committee in March 2019. Within this details were provided about how the Corporate Volunteer Project was approved as part of the 2020 Programme and how it aims to maximise and optimise the use of volunteers across all services, creating consistencies in: marketing, recruitment, induction, expenses, training, ongoing support and efficient volunteer processes with the purpose of optimising the use of volunteers and aiding retention. It was agreed that a further update would be provided on this project in Autumn 2019.

3.0 Corporate Volunteering Project

- 3.1 The Corporate Volunteer Project is being delivered by the Resourcing Solutions Team – HR, recognising the synergies between the volunteer journey and employee journey, whilst acknowledging that there are key differences between the two. The focus for this project is to achieve the objectives presented at the mid-cycle briefing last year. A Volunteer Sub-Group continues to meet regularly to provide a steer for the project, discussing challenges and priorities and inputting into areas of work as they progress. This group comprises of representatives from Stronger Communities and the Resourcing Solutions Team and lead officers from the services that manage volunteers.

3.2 Volunteer Strategy

At O&S in March a draft paper was shared; a Corporate Volunteer Strategy (Appendix 1), which outlines NYCC's commitment to volunteers. The draft strategy was produced in consultation with the volunteer sub-group, volunteer co-ordinators/managers in NYCC, our volunteers, HR Senior Management Team and Management Board; and has been well received by all the groups shared with to date. The strategy was adopted by the Executive on 13 August 2019 and will be uploaded to the NYCC internet and intranet to convey our commitment to volunteers.

3.3 Expenses

At the previous meeting Corporate O&S were advised that work had identified a series of inconsistencies relating to the way in which volunteer expenses were paid, and differing rates. Following consultation the volunteer sub-group, volunteer coordinators/managers, Unison and corporate Pay and Reward a paper was developed that proposed a framework for volunteer expenses for volunteers directly managed by NYCC. The framework will ensure volunteer expenses are paid across a consistent framework, ensuring equality for all. Impact of the new proposals was considered and are minimal. All of the previously mentioned parties confirmed that they agreed to the proposals and this has resulted in a Volunteer Expenses Policy being developed.

3.4 Celebration of volunteering

During Volunteers Week (1st - 7th June) NYCC promoted the valuable work our volunteers do by hosting various celebration events across the County, attended by the Chairman of the Council Jim Clark. Councillor Clark met a range of volunteers including those from Libraries, the Young People's Council, School Governors and Gardening Volunteers who help maintain a garden used by Health and Adult Services service users. Promotion of their efforts was also actioned via a lunchtime promotional space at County Hall, in partnership with Community First Yorkshire, press publicity and social media.

3.5 Volunteer Branding

New branding has been developed in partnership with volunteer coordinators and members of the volunteer sub-group. The branding aims to bring all of the NYCC volunteer projects common recognition and an identity. The branding is being rolled out across all NYCC volunteering marketing materials including a new pop-up banner that will be used to promote our volunteering projects.

4.0 Future Focus

4.1 The Corporate Volunteering Project is continuing to work on a range of projects to streamline the processes for attracting, recruiting and managing volunteers.

4.2 Elements include:

- Developing and implementing a marketing strategy to promote NYCC volunteering in an engaging and positive manner
- Reviewing the current Volunteer Policy and guidance
- Transitioning to customer focussed digital volunteer customer journey. Including online volunteer application form
- Developing a consistent customer focussed approach to volunteer induction and training
- Reviewing methods to celebrate, recognise and reward volunteers and raise the profile of volunteer value.
- Develop business tool to aid the assessment of appropriateness of volunteers as an approach including awareness of the minimum commitment and volunteer experience standards.

5.0 Recommendations

- 5.1 It is recommended that Members review the update provided on the Corporate Volunteer Project and provide feedback, thoughts and ideas for future consideration in order that a consistent and equitable approach is adopted.

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North Yorkshire County Council Volunteering Strategy

Introduction

North Yorkshire County Council welcomes and celebrates the benefits of volunteering for individuals, organisations and communities.

The strategy is primarily focused on volunteers that are managed directly by the County Council, however there are also many volunteers managed by partner organisations who also contribute to our service delivery. All of them are valued for the contribution that they make. Where volunteers are managed by other organisations we will encourage the organisation to adopt and implement similar practice.

Who is a volunteer?

A volunteer:

- commits their time and energy for the benefit of others;
- gives their time freely, through personal choice; and
- volunteers without expectation of financial reward.

A volunteer is not:

- a paid worker; or
- on a work placement, work experience or on government sponsored schemes.

Volunteers may be involved in one-off or longer term, regular activities and may be based in a building, out in the community or in the countryside within North Yorkshire.

Volunteers:

- bring additional skills, knowledge and expertise;
- enable a more responsive and flexible approach;
- give insight to the needs and priorities of communities;
- enable extended service provision in ways that would not otherwise be possible;
- champion causes and raising awareness within the wider community;
- enhance the quality of work and customer experience; and
- improve the wellbeing of customers, staff, local communities and themselves.

Our principles

Volunteers are an integral part of service delivery, bringing benefits to customers, services and the volunteers themselves. We commit to ensuring that:

- good quality volunteering opportunities are available;
- volunteers are managed effectively, efficiently and consistently across the council;
- barriers to volunteering are removed where possible, enabling and encouraging a diverse range of people to volunteer;
- the benefits and costs of involving volunteers are understood; and
- the involvement of volunteers is appropriately resourced.

Roles and responsibilities

The volunteer role is based on trust and mutual understanding. The volunteer can choose at their will to attend the tasks which meet their interests, however certain volunteering roles will have essential requirements such as health and safety, specified ways of working, or necessary training where refusal to participate will debar them from volunteering on that task/role. There is no obligation for the County Council to accept a volunteer, provide continuous opportunities or provide training unless it is essential to the volunteering.

However, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged, both what volunteers can expect of us and what we expect of volunteers.

Volunteers can expect to:

- have clear information about what is and is not expected of them;
- receive adequate support, including relevant training;
- be insured and volunteer in a safe environment;
- be treated with respect and in a non-discriminatory manner;
- receive appropriate out of pocket expenses within the agreed County Council volunteers' expenses policy;
- have opportunities for personal development;
- be recognised and appreciated;
- be able to say 'no' to anything which they consider to be unrealistic or unreasonable; and
- know what to do and who to speak to if something goes wrong.

In return we expect volunteers to:

- be reliable and honest;
- participate in necessary training;
- carry out all tasks within specified ways of working and relevant County Council policies and procedures;
- uphold our values, contribute positively to the ambitions of the County Council and avoid bringing the organisation into disrepute.

Operational policies and practice

The Chief Executive will have authority to agree operational policies and practice regarding volunteering including recruitment, training and expenses and may delegate this responsibility to a nominated Officer.

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