

APPENDIX A

Forest Heath District Council and
St Edmundsbury Borough Council

Employee Volunteering Scheme

January 2015



Employee Volunteering Scheme

1. Introduction

We are committed to supporting our employees in seeking out opportunities for volunteering in the community. This scheme is designed to support employees that already volunteer and to encourage new volunteers to get involved in opportunities to share their skills and experience, develop new skills and contribute to our communities.

2. Employee Volunteering

The scheme aims to increase volunteering opportunities for employees at West Suffolk. This can be as individuals or within operational teams. We will release employees from normal duties and consider reasonable requests to allow staff to continue current volunteering or undertake new volunteering activities.

3. Why volunteer?

For volunteers - it can bring a great sense of personal achievement and self-worth by contributing to the community and forging closer relationships with our communities; give a broader outlook and appreciation of diverse communities; provide an opportunity to pass on the benefit of experience and skills; help to develop new skills and experiences and enhance wellbeing; improve employability by providing valuable experience and demonstrating a 'can do' attitude.

For teams who undertake volunteering opportunities - it can bring a sense of achievement and can enhance working relationships and understanding of strengths and development needs in the team.

For communities - it can help voluntary organisations to deliver services and improve communities; build a more robust and resilient society; improve relationships between council staff and residents and bring in new skills, experience and education.

For the Councils - it can improve morale, commitment and performance; enhance our reputation and profile; encourage individual and team development; strengthen relationships with voluntary, community and faith sectors and help to demonstrate our commitment and support to both our employees and communities.

4. Volunteering

All employees are able to take reasonable time off for personal volunteering, team volunteering and/or personal development and training. This can be taken one day at a time, a number of days together or broken down to fit the needs of the activity as long as it does not have a detrimental effect on your substantive

role and the service. Staff can also 'top-up' volunteering allowances with annual leave, flexible working or unpaid leave if required, with line manager approval.

Volunteers must not be paid by the organisation they are supporting, except for the reimbursement of legitimate expense actually incurred. They will not be able to claim back any hours volunteered outside of normal working hours or any travel and subsistence incurred from West Suffolk Councils.

All participants must meet the following criteria:-

- have completed at least 12 months continuous service with West Suffolk councils
- have a Bradford Factor of below 150 over the previous 12 months
- have achieved a performance review rating of consistent or higher
- have agreed the time to be taken with their line manager at least a month in advance of the volunteering activity.

In addition:

- the volunteering activity must be agreed with your line manager, who should be provided with sufficient information for him/her to understand the commitment, any risks and the type of activity you will be engaged in.
- the volunteering request cannot be approved if it will involve any financial cost to 'back-fill' staff cover, or if it will disrupt or adversely affect operational needs
- employees must obtain agreement to volunteering leave, with their line manager, before any commitment is made to a voluntary organisation
- there must be no conflicts of interest, eg political campaigning
- activities must benefit the environment, individuals, charities or community groups within Suffolk or close to the volunteers' home neighbourhoods and from which Suffolk residents benefit
- activities undertaken are with organisations who deliver services that are 'not for profit'
- activities undertaken do not cause offence and promote good relations
- any abuse of the scheme could result in disciplinary action.

5. Volunteering activities

Volunteering can be anything from helping out a neighbour to being a trustee for a charity. It can be a short one-off activity or a regular ongoing commitment. For example:

- mentoring Looked After Children and vulnerable people
- supporting vulnerable adults and disabled people
- reading and listening activities at school
- outdoor activities, eg countryside conservation or land clearance
- organising sports activities, clubs or events

- trustee for a charity
- Volunteering through The Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme
- team volunteering events

Staff can volunteer to work with any charity or through the Volunteer Bureau, provided there is no conflict of interest with our volunteering principles (see section 6 below). If the volunteering is a collective team event they can contact Community Action Suffolk or an organisation directly to discuss possible opportunities. Teams will be asked for the numbers involved, any limitations, in terms of ability, times, locations etc and to provide a range of dates for the organisation to provide a list of volunteering opportunities for teams to choose from. Teams will have to seek agreement from the line manager.

Charities rely on team and individual volunteers' support, so as much notice as possible to set up events with the chosen host should be given and any cancellations should also be notified as soon as possible in order to give the organisation time to find a replacement team.

6. Our volunteering principles

When volunteering, employees agree to:

- respect the privacy, property and confidentiality of others
- report any problems experienced to the line manager, the organisation and the Volunteer Centre (where it has acted as a broker)
- aim to fulfil the commitments made and inform the named contact in the voluntary organisation if they are unable to attend
- act in a professional way, recognising that they are in part representing the council while carrying out the volunteering activities.

The Employee Code of Conduct continues to apply to employees when volunteering. The code contains provisions that encourage the highest standards of integrity and personal conduct on the part of all employees.

It is strongly recommended that the organisation for which you volunteer is registered with a Volunteer Centre for quality assurance purposes. It is recognised however that not all volunteering opportunities are available through Volunteer Bureaus or organisations – eg a village litter pick arranged by a group of individuals.

Certain activities that involve working with young people or other vulnerable groups may require you to have a Disclosure and Barring Service check (DBS). Any requirement for DBS checks will be at the cost of the voluntary organisation and in accordance with their procedures.

It is the employee's responsibility to satisfy themselves that the volunteering organisation's quality assurance and health and safety policies are adequate.

The voluntary organisation will be responsible for providing any induction, health and safety or other training required in order that the volunteer can perform activities correctly and safely.

It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that there are no conflicts of interest and that staff have considered and accepted any risks. The council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur while employees are volunteering for other organisations. It is the responsibility of employees to ensure that their activities are suitably insured (or accept the personal risk they may be taking).

Volunteers will only be indemnified under the public liability policies held by Forest Heath District Council and St Edmundsbury Borough Council where a council employee is volunteering in connection with services for their own council (even if in a different service area and on days not normally worked).

If employees are involved in community transport volunteering, using their own car, they will need to check that their own motor policy is suitable.

If the volunteering activity requires specialist clothing or equipment, this will need to be provided either by the organisation or the responsibility of the employee undertaking the activity.

7. More information

For more information contact human.resources@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Other useful information:

Employees Code of Conduct (available on the Intranet)

Community Action Suffolk www.communityactionsuffolk.org.uk

Volunteer centres www.volunteercentresuffolk.co.uk

Do-it Volunteering www.do-it.org.uk