

Committee: **Council**

Date of Meeting: **21st July, 2022**

Report Subject: **Employer Supported Volunteering Policy**

Portfolio Holder: **Councillor Stephen Thomas, Leader / Executive Member Corporate Overview & Performance**

Report Submitted by: **Andrea J Prosser, Head of Organisational Development**

Reporting Pathway								
Directorate Management Team	Corporate Leadership Team	Portfolio Holder / Chair	Governance & Audit Committee	Democratic Services Committee	Scrutiny Committee	Executive Committee	Council	Other (please state)
X	X						X	

1. Purpose of the Report

The purpose of this report is to seek approval of the implementation of the proposed Volunteering Policy (appendix 1).

2. Scope and Background

2.1 According to the National Council for Voluntary Organisations, employer supported volunteering is where organisations provide opportunities for employees to volunteer in work time, for example by allowing volunteering leave and such programmes can help form a bridge between organisations, their employees and the wider community.

2.2 Employer supported volunteering is important because of the potential benefits it can bring. Some of the recognisable benefits for employers include the link between volunteering and employee development and the opportunity to engage with employees, whilst improving communication and understanding of the local community. In addition, employers can also build stronger teams and improve staff morale whilst improving overall brand reputation and demonstrating a commitment to make a difference to local communities.

2.3 Volunteering gives employees the chance to build connections with their local communities and give back to society while working on issues they feel passionate about. They also gain the opportunity to develop key soft skills in areas such as coaching, leadership, organisational abilities, confidence and gaining an overall sense of fulfilment.

2.4 Community and voluntary sector organisations often have low budgets and value enthusiastic volunteers with specialist skills, expertise and knowledge. Corporate volunteering programmes work well when employers and volunteers have an open, mutually beneficial and respectful relationship with the organisation they wish to support.

- 2.5 The proposed attached Volunteering Policy will entitle an employee to **one day paid leave per year** to undertake volunteering opportunities in the local community. In line with the Policy, the Council would encourage its employees to volunteer by allowing time off during work hours which they will use to volunteer at an establishment of their choice i.e. charities, community groups, schools, care homes, hospitals, etc. The Policy clearly sets out the parameters of the leave entitlement.
- 2.6 The Policy will apply to all Council staff irrespective of length of service, excluding those employed on a relief basis. The policy will not apply to school based staff who are under the delegated powers of a Governing Body.
- 2.7 The Gwent Association of Voluntary Organisations (GAVO) have also been consulted in conjunction with the development of this policy and they have provided a direct link into themselves to support and guide employees in finding an appropriate volunteering opportunity.

3. **Options for Recommendation**

3.1 **Option 1**

Support volunteering leave by approving the proposed Volunteering Policy for implementation.

3.2 **Option 2**

Do not approve the Volunteering Policy for implementation.

4. **Evidence of how does this topic supports the achievement of the Corporate Plan / Statutory Responsibilities / Blaenau Gwent Well-being Plan**

- 4.1 The proposed Volunteering Policy has direct links with the Councils Corporate Plan, Wellbeing Plan and Workforce Strategy.
- 4.2 The Corporate Plan's core values include "proud & ambitious", "working together" and "raising aspirations", all of which can be supported by the implementation of the Volunteering Policy.
- 4.3 The Wellbeing Plan clearly sets out 5 objectives for the Council and its communities, all of which are supported by the introduction of a Volunteering Policy i.e. "Blaenau Gwent wants safe and friendly communities...". Allowing our staff to contribute in a meaningful way in our communities, promotes this objective and increases partnership working with local organisations/groups.
- 4.4 Priority outcomes for the Council's Workforce Strategy includes "A highly motivated and engaged workforce" and a "Modern Employer of Choice"; the introduction of a Volunteering Policy directly contributes to both of these priorities. Volunteering can have a significant impact on a person's health and well-being. It can reduce stress levels, improve mood, help people stay active and give them a sense of purpose.

5. **Implications Against Each Option**

5.1 ***Impact on Budget (short and long term impact)***

There are no direct budgetary implications as a result of implementing the policy however, cover costs for employees in front line positions for one day per year, should they utilise the entitlement, will be applicable.

5.2 ***Risk including Mitigating Actions***

N/A

5.3 ***Legal***

There are no legal implications.

5.4 ***Human Resources***

Allowing staff to volunteer in a meaningful way is known to improve employee wellbeing. This directly links to the Council's Workforce Strategy which will support our aim of having a highly supported and engaged workforce and being a modern employer of choice.

6.1 **Supporting Evidence**

Performance Information and Data

N/A

6.2 ***Expected outcome for the public***

Greater services from local charities etc. that benefit from volunteers.

6.3 ***Involvement (consultation, engagement, participation)***

The Trade Union (Unison, GMB & Unite) have had sight of the policy and raised no objections.

6.4 ***Thinking for the Long term (forward planning)***

Directly links the Council's Plans and Strategies as detailed above.

6.5 ***Preventative focus***

N/A

6.6 ***Collaboration / partnership working***

The implementation of a Volunteering Policy will improve collaboration and partnership working with local communities.

6.7 ***Integration (across service areas)***

Policy applies to all Council staff only. The policy will not apply to school based staff who are under the delegated powers of a Governing Body.

6.8 ***Decarbonisation and Reducing Carbon Emissions***

N/A

6.9a ***Socio Economic Duty Impact Assessment***

N/A

6.9b. ***Equality Impact Assessment***

Integrated Impact Assessment completed – no adverse impact.

7. **Monitoring Arrangements**

7.1 The Policy will be reviewed and updated by Organisational Development on a regular basis.

8 **Background Documents /Electronic Links**

8.1 Appendix 1 – Volunteering Policy