

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	25 March 2015
Subject:	An update on the effects of staff volunteering policy and promotion of volunteering across the City.		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Communities and Neighbourhoods		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	None		

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To update Cabinet on the effects of the staff volunteering policy to date in the year 2014/2015.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the contents of the report be noted.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 **Staff Volunteering** - Staff have been able to undertake volunteering in work time for several years. Staff are paid their usual rate but volunteer time away from their day-to-day role to encourage and support the development of the VCS in Gloucester.
- 3.2 In 2014/2015 a target of 500 hours was included in the Corporate Plan performance measures. This figure (approximately half a day per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) post) was established through research from staff volunteering experience at other local authorities.
- 3.3 The Partnership and Engagement Team put a plan in place and, from July 2014, made a specific effort to encourage staff to use their allocated two days of volunteering. This promotion was done through staff e-mails, in-House magazine and monthly bulletins. The project is working well with 260 hours contributed to the target over the last 8 months.
- 3.4 **Volunteering brokerage for people living in Gloucester** - People living in Gloucester did not have access to face to face volunteering brokerage. The only method of finding volunteering opportunities was through the Gloucestershire Association for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA) or through national websites such as www.do-it.org.uk . This lack of facility was seen as a potential barrier to increasing volunteering.

3.5 Relationship and working arrangement with Volunteering Gloucestershire

Volunteering Gloucestershire is now run by County Community Projects (CCP) but up until 1 May 2014 it was funded by Gloucestershire County Council and delivered by Third Sector Services in conjunction with Gloucestershire Alliance for Voluntary and Community Action (GAVCA). The current service offers an informal interview with a CCP volunteer where local opportunities are discussed and contact information provided and it is then up to the individual to make contact with the agency/charity to secure the volunteer vacancy. This is available to all Gloucestershire residents but due to limited staff resources is only delivered from the CCP Offices in central Cheltenham. Following meetings with CCP it was decided that we would work in partnership to deliver a similar service in Gloucester and this is now available for 2 hours, twice a week from the City Council reception.

- 3.6 Staff can now access 1-1 support, twice a week to discuss their allocated volunteering hours as a result of the close relationship that has been formed with Volunteering Gloucestershire. The 1-1 support is held in the PACE interview room in Reception. This has been advertised on the All Staff E-mail.

3.7 Outcomes and benefits of new volunteering strategy

- 3.8 Since July 2014, 13 members of staff have volunteered approximately 255 hours in 6 months. Based on the allowance of 14.48 voluntary hours per FTE, 195 hours of staff working time have been delivered, the additional 60 hours have been provided by staff in their own time and because they are to the benefit of Gloucester residents, they have been included in the target.

- 3.9 Staff are encouraged to use their volunteering time to share their professional skills to support the development of the VCS. This not only offers an element of value for money to the service, but also supports the Council's ABCD approach. One of the most successful examples of ABCD staff volunteering comes from Partnership & Engagement Officer Verona Vidal. Verona uses her events management and community building skills to organise and run the Jamaican Independence Day Celebrations, a free event that is attended by hundreds of residents every year. Another example is; Trainee Surveyor Hayley Taylor who carried out a roof inspection on Community Building and Charity, The Raven Centre in order for them to gain insurance cover and continue to provide social inclusion projects for older residents. Staff have also supported: Community Christmas celebrations; The Friendship Café Youth Club; Conservation at Robinswood Hill developing bio-diversity projects and assistance with legal issues. The upcoming City Centre Spring Clean on March 20th will also provide ample opportunity for staff to use their volunteering hours.

- 3.10 The brokerage scheme has already seen one resident begin volunteering with a local art group. The art group itself is supported by a grant from the Hearty Lives project in Podsmead.

- 3.11 As well as supporting Gloucester residents and staff the relationship with Volunteering Gloucestershire offers other benefits to Gloucester City Council:

- Access to the National Volunteering database www.do-it.org where volunteering opportunities for Gloucester Community Groups and projects can be advertised as well as opportunities at Gloucester City Council such as the

Guild Hall. The database also provides up to date information on all volunteering vacancies.

- Reporting on the amount of Gloucester opportunities that have been applied for by local people.

- 3.12 Volunteering has positive effects on health and wellbeing, through being active and achieving social connections. It also allows people to accrue skills and knowledge. This has huge benefits to the city in helping reduce health inequalities and social isolation and supporting economic regeneration

4.0 Alternative Options Considered

- 4.1 No other options were considered.

5.0 Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 Continuing to promote volunteering will increase the skills base of people across the City, helping to grow the economic base and the health and well-being of our staff and residents.

6.0 Future Work and Conclusions

- 6.1 The following actions are part of the plan to increase the amount of volunteer hours in 2015/16 and maximise the use of the skills and assets of Council staff.

Staff skills matching

- 6.2 It was identified by the Partnership & Engagement team in June 2014 that a staff skills audit would be useful for matching strengths to opportunities in the Community as well as identifying areas for skills to be developed.
- 6.3 Following the Café Conversations in November 2014, it was clear that staff would like to know more about their colleagues, especially around job roles, responsibilities and skills. Utilising the staff intranet has been suggested as a way of holding and sharing this information and, this opportunity is being pursued.

Staff Induction and Appraisal and HR Support

- 6.4 It is also suggested that inductions and appraisals are the time for staff to share and record new skills they have recently learnt and express any expertise they would like to develop. As a result, the upcoming 2015 appraisal features a question on staff volunteering.
- 6.5 HR have been supportive in allowing the implementation of flexible volunteering hours. The existing policy is being updated so that staff can claim time off in lieu (TOIL) for volunteering delivered outside of standard working hours, therefore widening the options available and giving more support to the groups and projects that operate in the evenings and weekends.
- 6.6 Most recently, a local resident who is studying for a PGDip in HR at the University of Gloucestershire, attended the volunteering brokerage service and is now using her knowledge and expertise to assist with the promotion of staff volunteering and collation of the staff skills audit.

Rugby World Cup

- 6.6 The Rugby World Cup (RWC) offers huge opportunities for staff and our communities, and the Partnership and Engagement Team are working with the Rugby World Cup Event Co-ordinator as well as other voluntary and community organisations across the city to ensure they are involved in RWC 2015.

7.0 Financial Implications

- 7.1 When the volunteering policy was originally adopted, it was agreed that staff would be allowed two days per year volunteering. As there has been no change to the policy, there are no further financial implications.

(Financial Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

8.0 Legal Implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.

(Legal Services have been consulted in the preparation this report.)

9.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

- 9.1 There are no risks identified. There are opportunities for increasing the skills base of people across the City and helps to make groups sustainable.

10.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

- 10.1 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

11.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

- 11.1 Increased social connections and community projects can add to a feeling of security in communities as well as lower crime (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2002)

Sustainability

- 11.2 Staff volunteering is a sustainable function and the benefits it brings to both staff and organisations is important.

Staffing & Trade Union

- 11.3 Not applicable

Background Documents: None