Draft Volunteering Policy

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1.0 Introduction

1.1 This policy has been developed to encourage and support volunteering into the Council and to provide guidance to ensure the interests of volunteers and service users are met within our volunteering activities.

1.2 This policy also aims to promote the contribution of volunteers to life in the local community and to ensure that where the Council involves volunteers it is done in line with good practice.

1.3 Volunteering is defined as: “The commitment of time and energy, for the benefit of society and the community, the environment or individuals outside, (or in addition to) one’s immediate family. It is unpaid and undertaken freely and by choice” (Department for Social Development, Join in Get Involved, Build a Better Future 2012).

1.4 This policy and associated procedures are designed to embed good volunteering practice and contribute to its consistent application across the Council.

2.0 Policy Aim & Objectives

2.1 **Policy Aim**: To develop and promote best practice in the involvement and support of volunteers in the work of the Council.

2.2 **Policy Objectives:**

- To develop and promote volunteering into all appropriate areas of the Council.
- To provide clear guidance to individuals, groups and corporate. organisations considering volunteering opportunities with Council.
- To identify and ensure clear guidance standards to which volunteers are expected to adhere to.

3.0 Policy Scope

3.1 This policy relates specifically to volunteers aged 18 years and over who want to offer their time to volunteer into the Council, when and where opportunities arise. It is important for volunteers to understand the benefits gained by the Council from volunteer participation and also to understand the Council’s expectations of the volunteers.

The scope of this policy does not extend to unsupervised or regulated positions within Council services.

The scope of this policy does not extend to the Council's elected members or employees who wish to undertake volunteering during work hours.

3.2 Council undertakes to provide volunteers with:

- A clear explanation of what they will be doing and why.
- Appropriate training, supervision and support for their role.
- A safe volunteering environment.
- Appropriate personal protective equipment to undertake volunteering activities safely.

3.3 In turn, the Council expects volunteers to:

- Maintain good working relations with other volunteers, employees and service users.
- Be an ambassador and positively promote the Council.
- Strictly adhere to the Council's decisions, policies and procedures.
- Attend and be responsible at all times. Undertake their role safely, both for their own sake and that of others.
- Demonstrate high standards of voluntary work and attend training as required.
- Maintain strict confidentiality.

3.4 The key implementation principles of the Volunteering Policy and associated information are:

- Safeguarding and Health and Safety commitments.
- Health check information.
- Agreement to general requirements (including attendance arrangements).
- Appropriate and relevant induction and training.
- Support available and supervision standards.

4.0 Linkage to the Council's Corporate Plan

4.1 Referring to Mid Ulster District Council's Corporate Plan 2024-2028, this policy contributes toward the delivery of Corporate Theme 2: Leadership for Partnership and Local Growth.

5.0 Roles and Responsibilities

5.1 The role of the Chief Executive in relation to this policy is to have ultimate responsibility for the implementation of this policy across Council services.

5.2 The role of Senior Executive Team in relation to this policy is to:

- Allocate resources to enable the Council to meet its responsibilities in relation to the Policy
- Promote the effective implementation of the Policy within their areas of responsibility
- Raise the profile of Volunteering within the Council

5.3 The role of Assistant Directors and Heads of Service in relation to this policy is to:

- Ensure employees are aware of this policy
- Ensure that relevant employees attend the relevant training sessions
- Provide assurance on the appropriateness of the Volunteer Role
- Descriptions within their areas of responsibility.
- Provide advice and support as required

5.4 Service area managers will be responsible for the promotion of volunteering opportunities, as well as the expression of interest and subsequent selection process, induction, training and management of volunteers and collation of associated information. They will arrange for potential volunteers to go through a selection process that is appropriate to the role offered. This will include:

- Providing expression of interest registration forms, receiving references and meeting the volunteers for a discussion about their suitability.
- Additional measures may be implemented depending on the nature of the volunteer role and criminal records checks are conducted where appropriate.

- Managers should aim to ensure both parties receive sufficient information to assess whether the volunteer opportunities available, match the potential volunteer's skills, qualities and needs.

- Volunteers will be given a settling in/taster period, the length of which depends on the nature and hours of the volunteering. During this period, volunteers are given additional support and a review meeting between the volunteer and their supervisor is held at the end of the settling in/taster period to ensure that all parties are satisfied with the arrangement.

5.5 In progressing the policy the relevant service, hosting the volunteer opportunity, will liaise with the Council's Human Resources Department on retaining relevant volunteer data. This includes information on referees, emergency contact, any medical or other disclosures, training records and

volunteering opportunities successfully completed within the Council. This information will be provided by the service areas managing the volunteering opportunity and will only relate to individuals who volunteer into the Council. It is the responsibility of the service manager to ensure all information for repeat volunteers is correct and up to date.

6.0 Complaints

6.1 Mid Ulster District Council aims to reflect the voluntary nature of volunteering. Therefore, in the first instance, the volunteer's designated supervisor will deal with minor issues raised about or by volunteers or their work.

6.2 Should reason for a formal complaint arise, the appropriate Council policies and procedures will be adhered to. However, these processes may be bypassed where a criminal offence is suspected. In this instance, the matter will be handed over to the police.

6.3 Volunteers should also be made aware of how to make a complaint.

7.0 Impact Assessments

7.1 **Equality Screening & Impact**

The policy has been subjected to equality screening in accordance with the council's screening process. This policy has been screened out for Equality Impact Assessment.

7.2 **Rural Needs Impact**

The policy has been subjected to a rural needs impact assessment.

7.3 **Staff, Financial and Insurance Resources**

7.3.1 No issues have been identified which would significantly impact on the Council's resources and delivery of its business as a result of this policy being implemented. Service budgets will be responsible for the reimbursement of volunteer expenses that have been incurred directly as a result of volunteering and any additional volunteering training requirements, required to complete the volunteering opportunity.

7.3.2 Mid Ulster District Council's insurance provides cover for any, 'voluntary worker, helper or instructor'. To comply with insurance requirements, volunteers should receive the same level of Health and Safety training as an employee, commensurate to the activities being undertaken.

8.0 Support and Advice

8.1 Advice and guidance on the implementation of this policy should be sought from the Communities and Place Directorate.

9.0 Communication

9.1 The Communities and Place Directorate is responsible for the communication and training in relation to this policy.

9.2 Volunteering opportunities will be communicated (as and when they arise) via a dedicated page the Council's website. This will include details of the specific service area or officer who should receive the volunteer registration form.

10.0 Monitoring and Review Arrangements

10.1 Implementation of this policy will be monitored and a formal review undertaken 2 years its effective date.

10.2 The policy will be updated sooner if required by legislative changes are made or if any issues are identified in the course of policy delivery.

10.3 Volunteers will be provided with an opportunity to complete a Volunteer Satisfaction Survey in order to monitor satisfaction amongst volunteers who undertake opportunities with the Council (Appendix E).