

Report to:	Resilient Communities Scrutiny Committee
Relevant Officer:	Carmel McKeogh, Deputy Chief Executive
Relevant Cabinet Member:	Councillor Maria Kirkland
Date of Meeting	5 November 2015

WORKING WITH VOLUNTEERS

1.0 Purpose of the report:

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to set out how the Council works with volunteers in order to help build a sustainable community that recognises and values to contributions of citizens as volunteers right across the town to allow scrutiny of the subject. Further the report sets out the challenges, issues and developments in terms of volunteering in order that the committee are aware of the on-going nature of the relationship with volunteers.

2.0 Recommendation:

- 2.1 The Committee is asked to consider the report and raise any relevant points and questions for debate and discussion at the meeting.

3.0 Reasons for recommendation:

- 3.1 The role of volunteers is becoming increasingly important in the community and it is important to recognise the contribution they make and also to consider the implications of that for the council.

3.2a Is the recommendation contrary to a plan or strategy adopted or approved by the Council? No

3.2b Is the recommendation in accordance with the Council's approved budget? Yes

3.3 Other alternative options to be considered:

The use of volunteers and their contribution is well recognised across the town and it will undoubtedly continue and is likely to grow. Other options would be disingenuous to consider.

4.0 Council Priority:

4.1 The relevant Council Priorities are:

As volunteers work across all of the Council's priorities except for the final one as they are not categorised as employees. The priorities are:

- Tackle child poverty, raise aspirations and improve educational achievement
- Safeguard and protect the most vulnerable
- Expand and promote our tourism, arts, heritage and cultural offer
- Improve health and well-being especially for the most disadvantaged
- Attract sustainable investment and create quality jobs
- Encourage responsible entrepreneurship for the benefit of our communities
- Improve housing standards and the environment we live in by using housing investment to create stable communities
- Create safer communities and reduce crime and anti-social behaviour

5.0 Background Information

5.1 Introduction

Volunteers play a significant role in making Blackpool a better place to live work and play. Volunteers come in many guises; they are of different ages, varied backgrounds, have a wide variety of interests and have many different reasons for giving their time to help others or to make the environment a better place.

Many public sector, voluntary and charitable organisations rely on volunteers to support their organisation and see them as an essential extension to the work undertaken by their employees.

In most cases the relationship between volunteers and the organisations they support is one of mutual benefit. The organisations are able to provide more extensive and better services and the volunteers benefit from their experience which might help them in terms of future career prospects, provide them with an interest and an outlet for their skills and talents or provide them with an opportunity to connect with other people and avoid loneliness.

This report will deal with the way that Blackpool Council works with volunteers and provides an opportunity to acknowledge and celebrate the contribution made by volunteers in the town as well as presenting an opportunity for us to improve that relationship and learn from best practice across departments.

5.2 Use of Volunteers

Most of the departments across the council use volunteers on a regular basis. Below

is a table which shows how some departments use volunteers and gives a brief explanation of the nature of the volunteering activity.

Department	Service	Volunteering Role	Number of Volunteers Involved	Subject to safe guarding checks
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Volunteer Driver	8	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Attendant Scheme	3	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Attendant Scheme/ Highfield Day Centre	1	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Attendant Scheme/ Sitting Service	1	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	BCIL Meet and Greet	18	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Claremont Club	3	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Craft Group Support	3	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Friendly Face Volunteer	1	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Highfield Day Centre Support	11	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Highfield Tea and Coffee Support	6	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	HSCS	1	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Keats/ Music at Keats	2	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Out and About	11	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Phoenix	1	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Sitting Service	23	Yes
Adult Services	Social Care Volunteer's	Social Isolation Project	1	Yes
Cultural Services	Library Services	Digital Champion	11	Yes
Regeneration Tourism and	Heritage	Family History indexing and Sources list	2	No

Culture				
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Tourism Collection	1	No
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Theatre index	1	No
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Published Photograph index	1	No
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Illuminations Archive	1	No
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Ralph Smedley Listing	1	No
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Blackpool Comic Seaside Postcards	1	No
Regeneration Tourism and Culture	Heritage	Barry Shaw Collection	1	No
Culture Services	Library	At Home Library Deliveries	13	Yes
Adult Services	Langdale Day Service	Community Volunteers	26	Yes
Parks and Green Spaces	Marton Mere	Volunteer Rangers and reserve guides	15	No
Parks and Green Spaces	Parks (various locations)	Friends Groups	120	No
Sport Develop- ment	Active Blackpool	Steps to Health	22	Yes
Sport Develop- ment	Cycling	Wheels4All	3	Yes
Sport Develop- ment	School and Community	Young Leaders	156	No
		Volunteers	66	Yes

5.3 **Focus on Adults Services**

The Social Care Volunteers Team provides a service to Blackpool Resident, offering a variety of respite and support opportunities to carers. The services include a Sitting Service, Out and About Service, Activity Services operating from various locations in Blackpool, Driver Attendant Service, Social Isolation Pilot, Volunteer Driver Service, Meet and Greet Service and Lunchtime Support Service.

The Sitting and Out and About Services provide 1-1 support and referral is via the Social Care teams with a strict criteria that a Carer Assessment has prompted the referral. The Social Isolation pilot has evolved into accepting referrals from adult social cares' initial contact team and social workers; this has proven to be a much better way of targeting people. The other services are not referral based but provided as a response to demand from other service areas, service users, parents/carers, commissioners and other stakeholders. Services are generally provided 9am to 10pm Monday to Friday, however there are some weekend arrangements in place and this is anticipated to grow due to Carer and Service User demands for a flexible approach to service delivery.

All those involved with the service benefit from service users, carers, volunteers and staff. It is satisfying to see a good match take place in the sitting service that allows the carer to have a break, get out of the house and pursue their interests, sees the service user and volunteer develop a relationship that is mutually beneficial and can last for a number of years.

Volunteers can often come to the service having experienced some major life changes that have impacted so much that low self-esteem, lack of confidence in social settings, vulnerability and social isolation are a consequence. Through the volunteers' journey the team have experienced people turning their lives around, finding work, forming relationships and generally getting their lives back together.

Over the last year the volunteers team has become more involved with volunteering in the wider council, the volunteer register has led to a Volunteer Networking group that meets quarterly, sharing good practice and networking. The volunteers' team is regularly asked for advice and support, we have been able to process DBS's from other teams, share procedures and processes. Initially work with adult service areas was the main function latterly children services have also come on board.

The Social Care Volunteers Team rely upon Council departments to share information about volunteers within their area so that these details can be added to the Volunteers Register; the release of this information has been challenging for some departments and although we send a request to all members of the Volunteer Networking Group to send this information through on a monthly basis, this hasn't

happened at the pace we would have anticipated.

5.4 Leisure and Parks Services

Leisure and Parks Services has extensive experience in working with volunteers from across a wide range of activities and services. Key to the interface has been the creating of the conditions to enable local people to take part. In relation to this services have worked hard to provide people with the tools that empower them to take ownership and control of their activity and services.

As part of the Marton Mere Heritage Lottery funded improvement project an Environmental Volunteer Coordinator is in post to develop the volunteering opportunities for the community. Volunteers undertake roles such as reserve guides, practical volunteer habitat works and manning the Visitor Centre. All volunteers are given an induction, supervision and training relevant to their roles. Volunteers are key to the project's success, building capacity and skills in the local community to manage and care for the reserve long-term.

Many of Blackpool's parks have volunteer run Friends Groups. These groups play an important role in developing the borough's parks through fundraising, events and promotional activities. Friends Groups are often able to draw down funds unavailable to the authority and ensure the local community's involvement in the park.

Using the power of sport, leisure and recreation volunteers are encouraged to take an active role working with the Council, URPotential, Blackpool and the Fylde College to support the delivery of local programmes. This enables volunteers to build their confidence, meet new people, help others and support their local community.

Steps to Health is a successful walking programme delivered by qualified volunteers who lead weekly walks, which take place across Blackpool. The Sport Club network also operates across Blackpool managing local sports facilities and providing sporting opportunities for all ages and abilities.

Leisure Services also works closely with Sport England and Lancashire Sport to ensure that the thousands of people who volunteer within sport do so through the Governing Bodies of sport frameworks. The service works with various sports development groups across the town, supporting people to take control of their sport.

5.5 Reason for Volunteering

Volunteers undertake volunteering activity for a variety of reasons and the primary ones are detailed below:

Reason
To help my job prospects
To make good use of my knowledge and skills
To keep me active and busy
To help other people
Because I enjoy the particular activity/task in its own right
Because I feel I ought to
Some other reason

5.6 The relationship between employment and volunteering

In recent times, particularly as a result of the cuts to public services there has been much made of the need to think differently about how services are provided and to encourage people to volunteer in areas that were once seen as areas of paid work. Some might argue that this is taking us back to a time when people were less reliant on local and central government to provide solutions and is returning to a time where being a good citizen was seen as the norm. A good example of this might be the issue of loneliness. Some would say that loneliness is exacerbated by a lack of old fashioned 'neighbourliness' and that volunteers are stepping into a place which should have been occupied by good neighbours. Others might say that it is part of a paid carer's job to provide social contact for people who are isolated and should be a paid for service or that voluntary sector organisations should be paid to create hubs where lonely people can get together and meet. Whatever the view on these matters, the cuts to funding in the public sector have meant that the ability to tackle such problems by the provision of a 'paid for service' is in reality not an option in most local authority areas.

Consideration does however need to be given to where we draw a distinction between employment and volunteering as there has been evidence of the abuse of volunteers in some sectors. It was widely reported for example that the use of unpaid interns in some of the country's most prestigious private sector organisations was having a detrimental effect on equalities as only those who could be financially supported by other means were able to take advantage of these opportunities which could ultimately lead to paid work.

The Hospital Trust in Blackpool has taken a clear view on the matter and has a clear policy that states the use of volunteers should enhance the experience of patients using Trust services. Volunteers are never asked to undertake a role which would ordinarily be done by a paid member of staff. Volunteers in the Trust undertake tasks such as:

- Navigators – helping patients and visitors find their way around the vast hospital site
- Trolley Volunteers – Selling sweets, drinks and newspapers off the trolley

which raises money for the NHS Charity

- Chaplaincy Volunteers – Provide emotional and spiritual support to people in hospital and their families
- Listeners – Provide social support to people who are isolated and lonely in hospital

It may be more complex for the local authority to determine a clear policy on this matter as the type of volunteering undertaken is so wide and varied but the Executive Member responsible for this area has asked that such work is undertaken.

5.7 **Safeguarding**

Another very important consideration in terms of volunteering is the fact that it can provide access to children and/or vulnerable adults and so ensuring that appropriate vetting arrangements are in place in such cases is essential. The council takes its responsibility for such matters seriously and each department is responsible for ensuring that they have robust processes in place where appropriate. However as the use of volunteers increases it is possible that there could be pockets of volunteers within departments across the Council that have not properly considered what checks should be in place for volunteers and further work is required to engage with all council service managers to ensure all volunteering activity across the Council is supported safely on an on-going basis.

5.8 **Co-ordination**

At present the arrangements for volunteering are managed at departmental level and this has some benefits in that arrangements can be made more quickly, responses can be proportionate to the type of work being undertaken, support with vetting is available if needed and relationships with volunteers are more personal and uncomplicated.

However other organisations such as the Hospital Trust have a centralised approach and this has different benefits such as more assuredness that safeguarding is appropriate, volunteers can be supported and seen as part of the corporate team. It might be appropriate to consider which model is best for the council as volunteering becomes more common across all council departments

5.9 **Recognising the contribution of volunteers**

The recognition needed by volunteers is often as little as a thank you from the people they support. However many departments want to recognise the contribution of volunteers in a more formal way and undertake a range of activities to provide such

recognition. These go right through from large scale award ceremonies to sending thank you cards and certificates to people and providing references.

5.10 **The Future**

It seems likely that volunteering will develop as part of the councils plans to build resilient communities as clearly many people get pleasure, learning, a sense of well-being and development from volunteering in their community. This growth and development will bring many benefits and the senior management of the council will need to consider how this can be supported so that it remains accessible, inclusive and beneficial for the participants whilst also safeguarding those who participate as volunteers and those in receipt of support from volunteers. To do this the council has established a volunteer co-ordination group who will monitor progress and developments in this area.

Does the information submitted include any exempt information?

No

6.0 **Legal considerations:**

6.1 In developing the use of volunteers the council is mindful particularly of safeguarding legislation and guidelines and health and safety law. Departments are aware of their responsibilities in this regard and are continually provided with information about changes in legislation and best practice guidance.

7.0 **Human Resources considerations:**

7.1 Volunteers are not employees of the council but often volunteer alongside employees who are trained to support and develop volunteers where applicable as part of their role.

8.0 **Equalities considerations:**

8.1 The council is committed to being inclusive in its practices of recruiting volunteers.

9.0 **Financial considerations:**

9.1 The use of volunteers supports the council and the residents often at no or very little cost to the public purse.

10.0 **Risk management considerations:**

10.1 Risks need to be managed in terms of safeguarding and health and safety issues and

department managers are responsible for ensuring that such risks are managed effectively.

11.0 Ethical considerations:

11.1 The ethical considerations regarding where the line crosses between employment and volunteering is one that managers and the council takes seriously. As part of the work of the coordination group consideration will be given to how that might be articulated in the form of a policy that works for all departments and does not unduly damage volunteers and their objectives around employment skill development.

12.0 Internal/ External Consultation undertaken:

12.1 The relationship with volunteers is one that has to be developed through consultation and engagement. It is vital that the relationship is built on a consultative approach as the volunteers clearly give of their time freely and need to feel as though they have a voice and are recognised for all that they do.

13.0 Background papers:

13.1 None