



SAFFRON WALDEN
TOWN COUNCIL

Volunteer Policy

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Saffron Walden Town Council

VOLUNTEER POLICY

Whatever the reason for volunteering, the benefits are many, providing challenging and rewarding experiences. Saffron Walden Town Council is committed to encouraging and enabling volunteers in Saffron Walden both in its direct provision of volunteering opportunities and in its support with other agencies including Uttlesford Volunteer Services.

1. Vision for Volunteering

1.1 The Council has a vision of thriving communities where volunteers play an active role in shaping local service delivery, promoting community cohesion and positively influencing decision making.

1.2 The Council will work with local communities and partners to develop a diverse range of suitable volunteering activities that are relevant for all people.

2. Why Volunteer?

People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons, for example:

- To socialise and get to know the local community
- To put something back into society and make a difference
- To regain or learn new skills
- As a route to employment
- To help the environment

3. Volunteering with SWTC

3.1 The Council regards volunteering as an activity where someone freely gives their time to help an organisation or an individual who they are not related to. In other words, volunteers are not paid staff and do not have a legally binding contractual relationship with the Council.

3.2 Volunteers bring a range of expertise to particular tasks or projects. Their expertise should complement and add value to the skills of staff. In many instances, volunteers can develop a range of support to service users that cannot be provided solely by paid staff, and the Council welcomes volunteers in all service areas. The Council is committed to engaging with volunteers in a way that complements and expands service delivery.

4. Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

Volunteer role descriptions, application forms, policies and other documents will be available on the Council website, or via partner volunteer organisations. More detailed information will be available from the Town Clerk.

5. Induction and Training

The Council will provide all volunteers with an introduction to the organisation as well as induction and training tailored to the volunteering opportunity.

6. Health and Safety

The Council has a duty of care to avoid exposing our volunteers to health and safety risks. All volunteers will be made aware of our Health and Safety Policy and any practical safety concerns as part of their induction. Volunteers are expected to comply with the Council's Health and Safety Policy. All volunteer roles will be risk assessed, covering both the tasks involved and the environment in which they will be conducted. In addition, where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary. All work undertaken by volunteers shall have due regard to the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974, any other health and safety legislation and Town Council policies relating to health and safety.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers will be made aware of the Council's Confidentiality and Data Protection Policies. If their role requires, volunteers must receive appropriate training, for example Information Governance training.

8. Raising the Participation Age – Volunteers aged 16 - 18

8.1 From 2013, the Government raised the Participation Age (RPA), which means that young people will remain in education for longer, and will be required to continue in education or training until the end of the academic year in which they turn 17.

8.2 From 2015, young people have been expected to continue in education until their 18th birthday (but should be encouraged to remain until they have completed any qualifications they are undertaking). This does not necessarily mean staying in school.

Young people are able to participate through:

- Full time education such as school or college
- Work based learning such as an apprenticeship
- Part-time education or training if they are employed, self-employed or volunteering for 20 hours or more a week.

Whatever programme they are undertaking, it needs to be accredited training funded by the Education Funding Agency (publicly funded)

8.3 The Council therefore has a duty in relation to RPA and will need to ensure that all 16 and 17 year olds have suitable education or training offers and that they are encouraged and supported to participate. It is therefore important that volunteers working in services within the Council, aged 16 and 17 meet the requirements of Raising the Participation Age.

9. Safeguarding

9.1 The Town Council will ensure that volunteers are aware of, and have received appropriate training in the Council's Safeguarding Policy on Children and Adults.

9.2 Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks will be carried out on any volunteer who in the course of their activity has regular, unsupervised, contact with the same group of children or young people. An Enhanced DBS check will also need to be carried out on volunteers who care for or deal with the personal affairs of any adult. Further guidance can be found in the Council's safeguarding policies and procedures.

10. Equal Opportunities

The Council is fully committed to equality and will proactively offer volunteering opportunities to people from different backgrounds as a contribution to developing and maintaining an organisation where differing ideas, abilities, backgrounds and needs are fostered and valued and where those with diverse backgrounds and experiences are able to participate and contribute. The Town Council operates an Equality Policy.

11. Ongoing Support

All volunteers will receive appropriate support and supervision in their activity. The level of supervision will match the nature of the role and the experience of the volunteer. All volunteers will have a nominated Volunteer Supervisor (ordinarily a member of staff or a longer serving volunteer), someone they can have regular access to if problems arise or when help and support is needed.

12. Expenses

The Council is committed to paying reasonable 'out of pocket' expenses ensuring that potential volunteers are not excluded due to financial reasons. However, these need to be agreed with relevant managers before the volunteer commences their activity. Where expenses are not agreed, volunteers must be made aware of this at the first opportunity in the recruitment process.

13. Volunteers in Receipt of benefits

It is the responsibility of the volunteer to establish whether volunteering is going to affect their entitlement to any social security benefits. Further advice should be obtained from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP), Job Centre Plus, or Citizens Advice Bureau.

14. Insurance

14.1 Volunteers must sign the Volunteer Indemnity Form on the first day of induction. This provides them with basic accident cover and also indemnifies the volunteer against any claim made against them or the Council whilst carrying out their activity.

14.2 Where volunteers drive as part of their voluntary activity, and use their own vehicle, they must ensure they possess the relevant class of insurance. Further guidance should be sought from the Volunteer's own insurance company. Supervisors must check and record this documentation if required.

15. Complaints

15.1 As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure. However, they are entitled to use the Council's Complaints Procedure.

15.2 Complaints by volunteers should be raised in the first instance with a member of the Town Council staff and dealt with informally where possible. Where appropriate, the complaint will be investigated fully by their Supervisor, or if the complaint is against their own Supervisor, by another Volunteer Supervisor or their line manager.

15.3 If a complaint is brought against a volunteer, this will be investigated by the relevant supervisor. Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter as quickly and informally as possible. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, then the Town Council reserves the right to tell the volunteer that their services are no longer required with immediate effect.

16. Moving On

16.1 The Council welcomes feedback and encourages volunteers to offer ideas for improvements. Volunteers who choose to stop volunteering at any time will also be invited to provide feedback before they move on.

16.2 Volunteers who are leaving the organisation and who have made a regular commitment to it should be offered an exit interview, reference and/or statement of their achievements to ensure that their services are properly and formally appreciated.

17. Termination of Activity

Where appropriate, the role and placement of the volunteers may be terminated by the supervisor at one week's notice, or immediately where inappropriate behaviour has occurred. In all cases, the volunteer will be entitled to an explanation of the decision and action taken.

18. Review

This policy will be reviewed every 2 years.