

Employee Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council supports employees who wish to do volunteer work within the community or for charitable institutions. Supporting volunteers helps the Council to build relationships with the local community and improve how it is perceived within it. Employees who do volunteer work can use the skills that they have developed at work to help the community; learn new skills including, for example, leadership qualities which may benefit them back in the workplace; and improve their morale, physical health and work-life balance.

2. Background and Legislation

- Equality Bill 2010
- Data Protection Act 1988
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- Police Act 1997
- Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974
- Working Time Regulations 1998

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Employee Volunteering Policy

1. Introduction

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council recognises the contribution that employee volunteering can make to the wider community, allowing employees to give something back to the community whilst at the same time enhancing flexibility and development opportunities for its employees.

The Council is committed to supporting employees who wish to take time to volunteer and become more involved in community activities during their normal working hours. The Council will encourage its employees to volunteer, but recognises that volunteering is a matter of personal choice.

2. Aims

This policy aims to increase volunteering opportunities for Southend-on-Sea Borough Council employees by:

- Releasing employees from normal duties for two days (or equivalent) per year pro-rata to undertake volunteering activity within the borough
- Broadening volunteer boundaries
- Encouraging volunteering to be used for development
- Reducing bureaucracy
- Communicating effectively
- Reviewing and revising the policy where appropriate or necessary

3. Why volunteering can make a difference

Employees who do volunteer work can use the skills that they have developed at work to help the community; learn new skills and experiences including, for example, leadership qualities which may benefit them back in the workplace; and improve their morale, physical health and work-life balance. Volunteering also gives a greater sense of personal achievement, boosting employees' confidence and improving employability.

Supporting volunteers helps the Council to build and strengthen relationships with the local community and improve how it is perceived within it. It also helps to attract and retain high-performing employees, improves employee job satisfaction and sets a positive example to other organisations and business partners.

The community relies on outside support to meet the needs of those it serves. Employee volunteers can help these organisations to deliver services and ensure early identification of community need and challenges. Skilled employee volunteers

can not only provide the professional skills which voluntary organisations struggle to afford, but also help the organisation's own staff through mentoring and coaching.

4. Volunteering allowance

All Southend-on-Sea Borough Council employees will be allowed to take two days (14 hours and 48 minutes) pro-rata per year paid time off to volunteer. This can be used flexibly to fit the needs of the activity and the voluntary organisation.

This covers employees who already volunteer and those just starting out.

The work time that is spent as a volunteer is in addition to any other time allowed off for special duties such as:

- Jury service
- School Governor
- Elections
- Trade union activities

Time off must be agreed at least four weeks in advance with the employee's line manager and before making any commitments to the voluntary organisation.

For those working part time, the volunteering hours are calculated pro-rata to employee working hours, in the same way as annual leave.

Employees can also 'top-up' volunteering allowances with annual leave if necessary.

Volunteering days cannot be carried over from one year to the next.

5. Making an application

Before volunteering, employees should discuss and agree with their line manager the type of volunteering they wish to do. Employees should also ensure that their proposed volunteering activity directly contributes to the delivery of one or more of the Council's Corporate Priorities. A current (2015/16) Corporate Priorities list and suggested volunteering activity is attached to this policy at Appendix 1. The list of activities is not exhaustive.

Once the employee has identified a volunteering activity and made contact with the relevant voluntary organisation, they must complete the Employee Volunteering Request Form attached to this policy at Appendix 2.

Managers should aim to consider and reply to the employee within 28 days of the request.

They must consider the effect of the request upon the service area, customer/clients and the employee's colleagues, in particular the impact if more than one employee in a specific area works flexibly. They should also be satisfied that there are no conflicts of interest.

Staff records and correspondence will be stored on Agresso once the self-service phase is rolled out. This will enable data to be obtained to assess the level of take up of the policy.

No expenses will be paid to employees by the Council to support the volunteering activity.

Once agreed, times and dates of the volunteering activity should be confirmed in conjunction with the employee's line manager and the voluntary organisation.

6. Appeals process

If the manager does not approve the proposed volunteering activity, employees have the right to appeal. Managers will need to evidence the reasons for their decision.

Employees must submit a written appeal to their Head of Service who will delegate to a nominated officer (relevant Group Manager) to review the decision. It could also be a nominated senior manager within the service in instances where the Group Manager has made the initial decision.

The nominated officer will then write to the employee to inform them of the final decision. Copies of relevant letters will need to be sent to HR.

Following the appeal, no further right of appeal exists. This does not prevent employees from applying for future volunteering activities, however employees can only make one statutory request in any 12 month period unless there are compelling reasons which warrant consideration to subsequent requests.

7. Types of volunteering supported

Volunteering can be a short one-off activity or a regular ongoing commitment. It does not have to be connected in any way with employees' work for the Council; however it **must** take place within the Southend borough and link to the Council's Corporate Priorities as mentioned in 5. Making an Application.

The types of volunteering that will be supported are entirely at the discretion of the Council and may include the following:

- Community care work;
- Environmental work and conservation projects;
- Fundraising for community projects or charities; and
- The administration of public events

8. Volunteering principles

The following volunteering principles apply to this policy:

1. Employees are made aware of this policy through publicity such as internal communications or website or recommendation through appraisal/supervision, where the line manager considers that employee volunteering would be of benefit for the staff member's development.
2. Before approving an individual/group volunteering activity, managers should consider the type of volunteering and the amount of time required to undertake it, in relation to the needs of their service and of the individual.
3. When volunteering, employees agree to aim to fulfil the commitment they have made and inform the named contact in the voluntary organisation if unable to attend.
4. Employees should adhere to the Code of Conduct; acting in a professional way and recognising that they are representing the Council while carrying out the volunteering activities.
5. Employees should report any problems to their line manager.

9. Insurance/Health and Safety

If an employee undertakes a volunteering activity, they will not be covered by the Council's Public Liability Insurance and the Council's Employer's Liability Insurance.

The Council will not be liable for any damages or injuries that occur during the volunteering period.

It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that the organisation they are volunteering with has suitable liability insurance in place to cover them whilst volunteering.

Employees may need to undertake a risk assessment and have any additional health and safety training that is relevant to the activity i.e. manual handling. It is the responsibility of the voluntary organisation to arrange this if it is required prior to the volunteering activity.

Certain activities that involve working with young people or other vulnerable groups may require a Disclosure and Barring (DBS) check. This must be organised through the voluntary organisation or independently.

10. Review of new working arrangements

Managers will need to undertake regular reviews to consider the effect of the request upon the service area, customer/clients and the employee's colleagues, in particular the impact if more than one employee in a specific area works flexibly. The Council will reserve the right to withdraw agreement if the review shows that the agreement is affecting the service.

11. After volunteering

Employees should discuss the volunteering activity with their manager at one-to-ones/appraisals and share the experience with colleagues e.g. intranet noticeboard.

Employees must also complete the Employee Volunteering Evaluation Form attached to this policy at Appendix 3. If employees would like to write about their experience in more detail, a template for volunteer stories will be available on the intranet.

Managers must ensure there is something in writing from the voluntary organisation to prove that employees have volunteered.

In instances where employees are due to volunteer and are unwell; normal sickness reporting processes must be followed. All other absences must be notified to the line manager, in accordance with normal procedures. Unexplained non-attendance may result in the volunteer permissions being revoked and may result in other action being taken.

Managers should be able to write out for a reference to the voluntary organisation once an employee has volunteered.

12. Five easy steps to volunteering

1. Take a look at the volunteering intranet page for more details about volunteering.
2. Attend a marketplace event with voluntary organisations to identify possible volunteering opportunities.
3. Discuss and agree the volunteering activity with your manager.
4. Get volunteering and tell your colleagues about your experience!
5. After you've volunteered, discuss the experience with your manager at your next one to one and appraisal, and plan your next volunteering activity.

Council’s Corporate Priorities 2015/16

Our vision – Creating a better Southend

Aims	Priorities	Examples of volunteering activities
Safe	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a safe environment across the town for residents, workers and visitors • Work with Essex Police and other partners to tackle crime • Look after and safeguard our children and vulnerable adults 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Befriending • Crèche support volunteer • Dementia Buddy • Emergency services support e.g. Police, Fire, Search and Rescue, St. John’s Ambulance, RNLI • Mentoring children and young people • Neighbourly schemes • Nursery volunteer • Office/administration support • Organisations for older people • Recycling Champion • Social care volunteer • Street Leader • Youth club volunteer • Youth organisation volunteer (Cubs, Scouts, Rainbows etc) • YMCA SOS Bus
Clean	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage and enforce high standards of environmental stewardship • Promote the use of green technology and initiatives to benefit the local economy and environment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beach clean up • Gardener • Neighbourhood clean up/litter pick up • Office/administration support • Recycling Champion • Wildlife support e.g. Essex Wildlife Trust
Healthy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote healthy and active lifestyles for all • Enable the planning and development of quality, affordable housing • Work with the public and private rented sectors to provide good quality housing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Befriending • Cooking advice • Drivers to appointments, social clubs etc • Health Champion/Advocate • Homelessness support • Mental health support • Office/administration support • Sports/fitness activities • Supporting active events e.g. Park Run • Tenants Associations • Visitors to hospital

		patients/vulnerable people
Prosperous	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the life chances of our residents, especially our vulnerable children and adults, by working to reduce inequalities and social deprivation across our communities • Ensure continued regeneration of the town through a culture led agenda • Ensure residents have access to high quality education to enable them to be lifelong learners and have fulfilling employment • Ensure the town is 'open for business' and that new, developing and existing enterprise is nurtured and supported 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Art & craft volunteer • Befriending Drivers to appointments, social clubs etc • Charity shop volunteer • Day Centre helper • Dementia Buddy • Event volunteers • Food preparation e.g. Food banks, kitchen assistant • IT support/advice • Office/administration support • School/college volunteers • Support Southend's cultural offer e.g. Libraries, Museums, Galleries, Cliff Lift
Excellent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with and listen to our communities and partners to achieve better outcomes for all • Enable communities to be self-sufficient and foster pride in the town • Promote and lead an entrepreneurial, creative and innovative approach to the development of our town 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Arrange community events • Befriending • Community improvement projects • Day Centre helper • Dementia Buddy • Fundraiser • Gardener • Office/administration support • Support cross cultural/community events

Appendix 3

Employee Volunteering Request Form

This form should be completed when making a request to volunteer under this policy.
Time away from work must be agreed with your line manager in advance; you should give as much notice as you can, preferably four weeks, in order to help you and your line manager make any necessary arrangements for cover etc.

Name:	
Job title:	
Department:	

Voluntary Organisation:	
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Details of the request: (to be completed by employee)
Please attach any available information you have may about the volunteering opportunity.

Links to Corporate Priorities:

Time off required: (dates of no. of hours requested)

I confirm that the above volunteering opportunity meets the criteria outlined within the Council’s Employee Volunteering Policy and is located within Southend-on-Sea.

I further agree to submit a case study/evaluation within two weeks following the volunteering activity.

When you have completed this section, pass the form to your line manager who will advise you of the decision, returning a copy of the completed form to you.

Line manager to complete: Decision AGREED / NOT AGREED (delete as appropriate)

If not agreed please give the reason(s) for your decision:

Signed: Print name:	Date:
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Appendix 4

Employee Volunteering Evaluation Form

Please complete this form within two weeks of undertaking your volunteering and remember to keep a copy to use as part of your appraisal.

Name:		Job title:	
Department:			
Voluntary Organisation:			
Voluntary activity undertaken:			
Date(s) undertaken:			
What did you enjoy about the volunteering activity?			
What new skills or knowledge did you acquire?			
What did you least enjoy about the volunteering activity?			
Are there any changes to the policy that you would wish us to reflect on?			
Any other comments (continue on a separate sheet if necessary)			
How would you rate the overall volunteering activity? (please circle)	1 poor		
	2 satisfactory		
	3 good		
	4 excellent		