

Section 1 - Purpose

- 1.1 The aim of the Volunteer Leave Scheme for employees of the Council is to;
- Support the Councils' Community agenda by encouraging employee participation in volunteering;
 - Benefit local voluntary community organisations where possible;
 - Allow employees to apply and improve their skills and give them a greater range of experience;
 - Encourage a healthy work/life balance for employees.
- 1.2 Whilst all employees are actively encouraged to participate in volunteering, the Council reserves the right to refuse or defer any request for volunteer leave to ensure that quality services continue to be delivered to customers and residents at all times. This applies to both front line and support services equally.
- 1.3 The Council is committed to being an equal opportunities employer and is therefore committed to equality and diversity principles in operating this scheme.

Section 2 - Definition of a Volunteer

- 2.1 There is currently no legal definition of what a 'Volunteer' is, however, the term 'volunteering' is broadly described as '*any activity which involves spending time, unpaid, doing something which aims to benefit someone (individuals or groups) other than or in addition to close relatives or to benefit the environment*'. (*Volunteering England*)
- 2.2 A 'Volunteer' is therefore anyone who freely commits time and energy for the benefit of others, without expectation of any financial reward.

Section 3 - Scope

- 3.1 This procedure will apply to all employees who currently undertake volunteering or are considering volunteering in the future.
- 3.2 This procedure aims to provide clear direction and guidance to employees who wish to volunteer and Manager's who manage staff who volunteer.

Section 4 - Principles

- 4.1 Volunteer Leave will only be recognised for volunteering activities which are undertaken for a registered charity or voluntary organisation. One-off projects that will benefit the community or individuals will also be considered. Examples of one off projects are community organised days to tidy/maintain a neighbourhood and marshalling at a community event.
- 4.2 The Council recognises that the voluntary sector can face challenges in sourcing volunteers. As such, under this scheme an employee will be able to volunteer for up to an equivalent of two working days per annum (pro rata to hours of work). For the purposes of this scheme, volunteering will normally be undertaken during an employee's normal working hours.
- 4.3 In exceptional circumstances, an employee may volunteer outside of their normal working hours and take an equivalent amount of time off in lieu during normal working hours. Where this occurs, approval must be sought from an employee's Head of Service in advance of undertaking volunteering activities and evidence of the volunteering activity must be provided.
- 4.4 Volunteer Leave will count as paid special leave and will be subject to Head of Service approval. The needs of the service must be considered as a priority in agreeing to any request for volunteer leave. Agreement by the Head of Service must be sought before any volunteering takes place, or the employee commits to any volunteering.
- 4.5 Where an employee already volunteers they may benefit from this scheme provided their volunteering meets the criteria. No backdated volunteer leave will be provided. Volunteer leave will commence from when an employee's volunteer leave application is approved.
- 4.6 Volunteer leave may be taken in a number of ways, which best meets the needs of the volunteering organisation, the employee and the Council, and which is approved by the Head of Service e.g. two consecutive days, four half days or taken in blocks of a few hours.
- 4.7 A Volunteer Leave Application (attached) must be completed by the employee and authorised by the Head of Service before any volunteering is undertaken or committed to by the employee. Leave taken under this policy must be of benefit to the employee and the Council equally. A copy of the completed and signed form must be provided to Capita HR. The application details further principles which form part of the scheme.
- 4.8 Employees wishing to volunteer under this scheme will be responsible for organising their placement with the appropriate volunteering bureau or directly with the organisation concerned.

- 4.9 Employees planning to undertake an approved period of volunteer leave must enter the dates into the relevant leave recording system, in advance of the volunteering taking place.
- 4.10 Employees who have successfully applied to undertake volunteering activity within the scope of this Scheme should request special leave through the normal leave booking procedures, where the activity will be undertaken in normal working hours. Where the volunteer activity will be undertaken outside of normal working hours, staff should reclaim this as Time off in Lieu (TOIL), again using the relevant leave booking procedures.
- 4.11 Employees benefiting from this scheme will be required to provide an annual update to the Council on the contribution their volunteering has made. This will raise the profile of the scheme and in turn, encourage more staff to volunteer.

Section 5 - Review of Procedure

- 5.1 This procedure will take effect from 12th March 2019 and will be subject to regular review in consultation with representative bodies.
- 5.2 The Capita HR team will collate completed Volunteer Leave request forms and will report leave taken under the Scheme to Executive Board on an annual basis.

APPENDIX A: VOLUNTEER LEAVE SCHEME APPLICATION

The Council recognises that employees gain valuable skills and experience in undertaking voluntary work and consider voluntary leave to be an opportunity for personal development. In line with other learning and development activities, volunteering should be planned to obtain the maximum benefit for the employee and the Council. Employees wishing to undertake a volunteer placement under the Scheme must provide the information requested below, in discussion and agreement with their immediate line manager. The relevant Head of Service must also approve the application prior to submission.

To be completed by the employee:

Name	
Job title	
Directorate	
Line Manager	
Head of Service	
Start and end dates	
Required time commitment (days/hours)	
Name and address of voluntary organisation/project	
Brief description of volunteer duties	

To be completed by the employee and line manager/Head of Service:

What specific skills and experience will you gain from this placement?	
How will you apply these skills and experience in your role?	
In what way(s) will your team benefit from your volunteer placement?	
Line manager comments on the above	
Head of Service comments on the above	

Authorisation:

To be signed by the applicant:

The information given above is correct and I agree to abide by the Scheme rules. If the application is approved and subsequently I do not undertake the placement, I will notify my line manager and cancel my request for volunteer leave.

In addition, I commit to report back to my line manager on the experience and skills I have gained through volunteering. This will be provided on an annual basis to my line manager.

Signed..... Date.....

To be signed by the Head of Service;

I agree to the application for Volunteer Leave under the Scheme details.

Signed..... Date.....

OR

I am unable to agree to the application for Volunteer Leave under the Scheme details at this time and have outlined my reasons below, including an alternative proposal where reasonably practicable.

Reasons:

Signed..... Date.....

Once signed by the above this form should be sent to Capita HR.