

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Cabinet	
MEETING DATE:	14th March 2012	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E 2356
TITLE:	Bath & North East Somerset Council, Staff Volunteering Scheme	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Equalities Impact Assessment		

1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 To consider the policy direction and resource implications of the proposed Council Staff Volunteering Scheme prior to formal approval required by the Council's Employment Committee.
- 1.2 To consider the impact of the Staff Volunteering Scheme in relation to the Council's Vision and Strategic objectives.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The Cabinet endorses the Staff Volunteering Scheme and agrees that the Employment Committee will consider the proposal for a Council scheme at their meeting in April 2012.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 The cost of the scheme will be largely borne by the individual service areas where staff absences will be required to be managed by the service itself. Research on other local authority schemes has indicated that during years 1 to 5 the take up is no more than 5% - 10%. Kent County Council introduced a similar scheme over 10 years ago and this is now well established within the organisation. They have no more than 15% of staff accessing the scheme at any one time.
- 3.2 It is therefore anticipated that during years 1 to 3 no more than 5% of staff will access the Council's scheme. Staff will carry out a variety of different activities including team building days, and direct support to local community and voluntary groups. Staff will be able to apply for a maximum of three days. The third day must be matched by at least one day of staff's own time.
- 3.3 Based on these figures, it is expected that during the first three years, 196 days will be taken by staff to undertake a voluntary activity. This is equivalent to 0.86fte post. This will be a combination of one day team building activities and individuals working directly with local community and voluntary groups on a variety of different projects.
- 3.4 The scheme encourages staff to give their own time to voluntary activity, therefore it has been estimated that the investment to the voluntary and community sector will be more than 300 days / 2,250 hours. The cashable benefit to the voluntary and community sector is well in- excess of £20,000. This is a modest estimate as it is recognised that there are a number of Council staff who regularly give their time freely to volunteer. These figures are not currently measured and therefore are unable to fully evaluate the positive impact.
- 3.5 The impacts of the scheme will be annually monitored to assess the value of the volunteering to the voluntary and community sector and the impact across the Council.
- 3.6 Implications on additional resource for Human Resources are marginal and will be managed within existing resources.
- 3.7 The scheme will be managed and co-ordinated by Policy & Partnerships. There will need to be some brokerage service for staff to undertake the scheme and this is currently being appraised through Policy & Partnerships Commissions and Service Action Plan. This will be managed through existing resource either in the service or external contracts (or a combination of both).

4 CORPORATE PRIORITIES

- 4.1 The Council's Staff Volunteering Scheme will offer the opportunity for its staff to work with young people, adults or community groups and help build their own skills and knowledge. The scheme offers particular benefit to those staff who have little or no direct contact with the community and the users of the Council's services.
- 4.2 The scheme will contribute to achieving the following Council's priorities:-
- *Promoting independence and positive lives for everyone*

- *Creating neighbourhoods where people are proud to live*
- *Building a stronger economy*

5 THE REPORT

- 5.1 Since 2008, the Policy and Partnerships Service has been organising a number of team volunteering days during National Volunteers Week. The request came from staff to do something different to the normal team away-days that were previously organised.
- 5.2 The days were extremely successful and since then Policy & Partnerships have continued to use this opportunity to hold their annual team away days and have involved other services in their activities. In 2010, students from both Universities and Somer Community Housing Trust staff were also invited to join the activities.
- 5.3 The experience drawn over the last four years has enabled Policy & Partnerships to develop a proposal for a Corporate Staff Volunteering scheme. The scheme aims to utilise the skills of the workforce and create opportunities to learn new skills and knowledge.
- 5.4 The scheme will also enable staff to build relationships within the community to obtain a better understanding of their needs and the challenges that face them for the future. This places staff in a better position to support the Cabinet's aims of building a listening Council with active and engaged community.
- 5.5 Within Bath and North East Somerset it has been estimated that over 20,000 people volunteer and give 5 million hours of their own time each year. These volunteers are vital to many voluntary sector organisations who rely on a steady stream of volunteers to help deliver their services.
- 5.6 As one of the largest employers in the area, the Council will be able to use its own scheme to highlight the benefits to other employers in the area that wish to engage in their own corporate social responsibility. Some work has already taken place on the social benefits of a local Volunteering Business Network, and it is recognised that this mechanism is important for encouraging active citizenship in Bath and North East Somerset.
- 5.7 There maybe opportunities in the future to explore the development of an exchange / reward scheme as a recognition of volunteers time and effort. This initiative is outside the scope of this report and would require further consideration.
- 5.8 The scheme will require formal approval of the Council's Employment Committee.

6. RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 The report author and Lead Cabinet member have fully reviewed the risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7. EQUALITIES

7.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed. Adverse impacts were identified and have been justified in consultation with the Equalities Workers groups in the following ways:-

7.1.1 Disabled workers may not consider themselves eligible for the scheme as they feel there are no opportunities that could support their disability. - Not all opportunities will be accessible for disabled staff. Staff will be encouraged to discuss with the host organisations their access issues and whether they are able to make any reasonable adjustments. The scheme will be monitored annually including assessment of take-up by equality group to ensure staff are not being disadvantaged.

7.1.2 Discrimination due to race, age, sex, disability, gender, religion - bullying and harassment of staff. During the initial discussion between the member of staff and their line manager about the scheme, they will need to discuss if the placement is a safe environment for the individuals needs, and what steps to take should any issues arise.

7.1.3 Discrimination due to religious beliefs. Staff will be encouraged to discuss with the host organisations about their personal needs for instance, dietary arrangements, prayer room etc.

7.2 The scheme will be monitored annually including an assessment of take-up by the equalities groups to ensure staff are not being disadvantaged.

8. RATIONALE

8.1 The report sets out a proposal for a Staff Volunteering Scheme that will positively respond to the Council's Vision and Strategic objectives and will encourage active citizenship and strengthen community engagement.

8.2 In addition, the scheme will encourage Council staff to take part in voluntary activities as a means of recognising personal development needs and, to utilise their skills and knowledge to support the voluntary and community sector across Bath & North East Somerset area.

9. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 None.

10. CONSULTATION

10.1 Policy & Partnerships have continued to encourage feedback as part of their annual staff volunteering team days. Feedback has been received from both staff and the host organisations to ensure that future activities are well planned and respond to the needs of the voluntary and community sector. It has also been important to understand the types of activities staff wish to contribute to and also understand the barriers staff face in considering volunteering outside their normal working life. The comments staff have made include:-

- *“Having some time to carry out volunteering roles during the week would be good (limited time obviously)”*

- *“Cultural acceptance (in the Council) that it is a worthwhile activities”*
- *“Have a statutory quota of days available for volunteering”*
- *“Should be core to employee personal development and training”*
- *Feedback from Paulton Scout and Guide group, “Thanks again for allow us to benefit from this, the rest of the Scout and Guide group have been blown away by how much we managed to achieve. It looks absolutely amazing, the only problem is, we now have plans for the rest of the garden!”*

10.2 The proposed Staff Volunteering scheme has been developed alongside the Council’s Human Resources department to ensure that it can be fully integrated into the personal development plans of staff and be able to respond to managers concerns and issues when implementing the scheme.

10.3 Consultation on the proposed scheme took place during 2011. A number key service areas including, legal, insurance, health & safety, took part in the discussions and commented on the proposals. Issues raised in these discussions have been logged and where possible have been amended.

10.4 Consultation has also taken place with the Equalities Workers Groups and the Unions. Feedback and issues raised during these discussions have been logged and responded to where possible.

10.5 The Chief Executive, Strategic and Divisional Directors have commented and approved the policy direction of the scheme.

10.6 Further opportunity to comment on the policy will take place as part of the formal adoption process through the Employment Committee.

10.7 *Cabinet members; Staff; Other B&NES Services; Unions; Section 151 Finance Officer; Chief Executive; Monitoring Officer*

11. ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

11.1 *Social Inclusion; Customer Focus; Sustainability; Human Resources; Corporate; Health & Safety; Impact on Staff; Other Legal Considerations*

12. ADVICE SOUGHT

12.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

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Background papers	<i>Equalities Impact Assessment</i>
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