



## **POLICY AND RESOURCES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 25TH MAY 2021**

**SUBJECT: EMPLOYEE VOLUNTEERING SCHEME**

**REPORT BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR - EDUCATION AND CORPORATE SERVICES**

### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To seek the views of the Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee on a proposed Employee Volunteering Scheme, prior to consideration at Cabinet.

### **2. SUMMARY**

- 2.1 The Employee Volunteering Scheme aims to increase volunteering opportunities for employees of Caerphilly County Borough Council, with the benefit of releasing the capacity of employees in supporting local communities and the associated benefits to employee well-being.
- 2.2 The proposed Scheme includes two types of volunteering:
- Day/part day event – Employees are released during work time to take part in volunteering events from an agreed programme.
  - Longer-term volunteering - Employees volunteer in their own time over at least a 12 month period on an approved scheme. Employees will be eligible to apply for a maximum of two days leave of absence per year in recognition of their volunteering commitment.

### **3. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Policy and Resources Scrutiny Committee are asked to note the contents of this report and make comments on the Employee Volunteering Scheme (**attached at appendix 1**) and the proposal to implement the Scheme with a review to be carried out in 12 months on the uptake and benefits of the Scheme, prior to consideration at Cabinet.

### **4. REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 4.1 To strengthen relationships with residents, voluntary and community sectors, and to deliver on our commitment set out in the new whole-authority operating model –

'Team Caerphilly – Better Together' strategy and support the 'social heart' ethos of the Council.

- 4.2 To release the capacity of employees in supporting local communities.
- 4.3 To demonstrate a commitment and support to employees by encouraging them to play a more active role in building a more robust and resilient society.
- 4.4 To contribute to improved employee job satisfaction, health and wellbeing, morale, commitment and performance.
- 4.5 To encourage individual development, with opportunities for employees that would not otherwise be met through the usual training routes.

## 5. THE REPORT

### 5.1 Employee Volunteering Scheme

This work has come out of the corporate review process and links directly to the cabinet outcomes agreed on 22nd July 2020 in relation to Strengthening Team Caerphilly and the ten Corporate Reviews. This project is part of the Corporate Volunteering and Community Partnerships review – outcomes details below.

- Council has an approved Volunteering Strategy that creates and sustains volunteering capacity across the Communities of Caerphilly
- Council staff are able to volunteer and have their contributions recognised
- Community resources are nurtured in order to provide additional capacity and support to key areas of need
- The 'Community spirit' seen through COVID-19 becomes the backbone of the Borough

The project to deliver this Scheme has followed a set project management pattern based on the agreed Corporate Review framework and governance model reviewed by Scrutiny on 10<sup>th</sup> November 2020.

The Scheme has been developed after research carried out on other public sector schemes operating in Wales and the rest of the UK (**attached as Appendix 2**). A cross departmental group worked on developing the Scheme with representation from GAVO. Extensive consultation was carried out with front line services, HR, Unions, employees who currently volunteer on the Council's Buddy Scheme and managers of those employees who currently volunteer on the Council's Buddy Scheme.

The proposed Scheme has been drafted to meet the objective of the Team-Caerphilly Better Together strategy and the 'social heart' ethos of the Council by allowing the release of employees to volunteer and support the local community. Employee volunteering has numerous benefits which are set out in the draft Scheme (**attached as Appendix 1**). In addition, employee volunteering supports corporate social responsibility.

- 5.2 Volunteering can be undertaken with voluntary or community organisations that meet the criteria set out in the Scheme. The Scheme is intended to support voluntary organisations and activity that contributes to well-being in the Caerphilly county borough area.

- 5.3 Activities should benefit the environment, economy, individuals (other than close relatives), charities and voluntary/ community groups within Caerphilly County Borough, or regional charities where there is a benefit to Caerphilly.

#### **Day or part day Volunteering**

- 5.4 Employees can register to volunteer for an organised whole or part of a day community event and subject to manager's approval they may be released to take part in these events.
- 5.5 Volunteering events will be available from a list of options decided by the Council, in partnership with voluntary organisations. The limited number of events will be available to employees on a first come basis.
- 5.6 The Scheme is intended to create additional capacity in communities and allow employees to take part in different opportunities to develop skills.
- 5.7 Examples of day/part day event volunteering could be marshalling a fun run in Caerphilly or painting a community centre.

#### **Long-term Volunteering**

- 5.8 Longer-term volunteering involves a commitment of a minimum of 12 months with regular volunteering and engagement taking place at least once a month. Longer-term volunteering will be carried out in employee's own time and outside working hours.
- 5.9 In some cases, employees may volunteer more regularly over a shorter period in line with demand from services, for example, employees may support night shelters over the winter months which run more regularly over a shorter period. These volunteering opportunities will be considered as providing an appropriate commitment and considered as long-term volunteering.
- 5.10 Employees who undertake longer-term volunteering will be able to apply for two days leave of absence which equates to 14.48 hours for fulltime employees or equivalent in hours depending on individual work pattern per calendar year. Examples of longer-term volunteering could be a trustee for a voluntary organisation, a telephone befriender, or social media support volunteer or volunteer as a buddy on the Caerphilly Cares Buddy Scheme.
- 5.11 Volunteering time will be managed through the Volunteering Wales Website.
- 5.12 Employee volunteering will be supported and monitored by managers and the experience will be discussed during My Time sessions. Employees will complete pre and post volunteering forms which will be discussed and signed off by managers during My Time sessions.

#### **CONCLUSION**

- 5.13 An increasing number of councils, other public sector bodies and businesses, recognise the positive contribution that an Employee Volunteering Scheme can make in encouraging employees to take an active role in their communities. The Scheme

provides the opportunity for employees to share skills, knowledge and experience within the local community.

- 5.14 Employee volunteering can strengthen relationships with residents, voluntary and community sectors and help to deliver on the commitments set out in the new whole-authority operating model – ‘Team Caerphilly – Better Together’. The Scheme is also consistent with the Caerphilly Cares strategy and the ‘social heart’ ethos of the Council.

## **6. ASSUMPTIONS**

- 6.1 The Scheme assumes that employees will propose themselves for volunteering opportunities. Managers should support any requests subject to the exigencies of service delivery which will take precedence.

## **7. SUMMARY OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment (**Attached as appendix 3**) has been carried out by the group working on the development and implementation of the Scheme and most areas have been recorded as neutral or having positive impacts. Any negative impacts identified will be mitigated through risk assessments. The Scheme has been developed to ensure employees across all contracts and departments can participate in volunteering. The day or part day events will cover a variety of opportunities and employees can participate during working hours. The long-term volunteering option can be carried out during the employees own time and leave of absence can be arranged with managers. An employee will participate in a minimum of 12 days volunteering which for full time staff will qualify them for two days leave of absence which demonstrates the economic benefit to the community. Employees have been positive about the Scheme and the benefits of volunteering in general.

## **8. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 Employees taking part in the day/part day volunteering events will receive their normal pay, therefore any costs associated to this will be covered by the service area. There is a cost when employees undertake longer-term volunteering as they can apply for additional leave of absence days or hours. This policy will be as per the other allowances (e.g., electoral duty, caring responsibilities etc) under the leave of absence policy.
- 8.2 Further research is required regarding any extra costs for additional resources required to set up and monitor the Scheme. A report will be prepared in due course with additional financial information.

## **9. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Releasing employees to undertake volunteering activities will have implications on employee resources within service areas, which managers will need to consider against the guidance. The proposal will have positive personnel implications with employees potentially benefiting from improved job satisfaction, health and wellbeing, morale, commitment and performance as a result of volunteering.

## 10. CONSULTATIONS

### 10.1

Response	Reply
<p>The GMB recognise that volunteering is the commitment of time by an individual to engage in events and activities in society and within the community to support others.</p> <p>For those staff who wish to be involved in volunteering the GMB believe that it could help with their wellbeing and provide valuable skills and experience to the member of staff, this will also build confidence to deal with people and organisations in the community and this will in turn build an individual's self-esteem.</p> <p>We are pleased to see how the council will support the member of staff when undertaking their volunteering commitments, we believe the report sets out all the support clearly and the GMB are happy to support the document.</p>	
<p>UNISON asked that the distinction between day/part day and long-term volunteer is clarified. UNISON sought clarification that volunteering would not be used to replace paid employment opportunities. UNISON wanted confirmation that a review would take place at the end of the year to capture numbers of employees who participated and the type of volunteering that was required.</p>	<p>An email response and a meeting were arranged with UNISON and the requested amendments have been made to the Employee Volunteering Scheme.</p>
<p>Social Services - asked questions regarding managing requests from employees who want to volunteer and demands from service provision.</p>	<p>The policy frequently refers to the importance of employees discussing all volunteering opportunities with their manager and that service provision will be a consideration. Discussions with managers demonstrated that management of volunteering could be carried out in the same way managers arrange training or cover sickness. Managers can also plan and agree several employees who can take part in a volunteering opportunity in any given year.</p>
<p>HR Strategy Group – several</p>	<p>All recommendations were accepted</p>

recommendations to wording and liability were suggested.	and made. Liability was confirmed with insurance and amended to reflect the advice from the Council's insurers.
Education Services – questions regarding managing employee demand for volunteering.	An email response was provided explaining the process.

## 11. STATUTORY POWER

11.1 There are no enabling statutory power(s) for the decision under consideration.

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Consultees: Cllr. Eluned Stenner - Cabinet Member for Finance, Performance & Planning  
Christina Harrhy, Chief Executive  
Richard Edmunds, Corporate Director, Education & Corporate Services  
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Sue Richards, Head of Education Planning & Strategy  
Lynne Donovan, Head of People Services  
Kathryn Peters, Corporate Policy Manager  
HR Strategy Group  
Employee Volunteering Corporate Review Group  
Unions

Background Papers:

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 Draft Employee Volunteering Scheme
- Appendix 2 Background and supporting information
- Appendix 3 Integrated Impact Assessment