

Economy & Place Scrutiny Committee

17 January 2018

Report of AD Planning and Public Protection & AD Highways, Transport & Environment

Use of Volunteers in Economy and Place Directorate: Briefing Note

Summary

1. This briefing note provides an overview of services in the Economy and Place Directorate which already have input from volunteers and the note identifies service areas where there is potential for greater use of volunteers.

Background

2. Benefits of community involvement in delivery of services are widely recognised national - see copy of Local Government Association 2016 publication “Community action in local government: A guide for councillors and strategic leaders” at Annex A.
3. There are many areas of services across the Council where volunteers are engaged to work in the community which supports and compliments the work undertaken by the Council. Case studies, information and guidance in relation to volunteering is published on the council website at: https://www.york.gov.uk/info/20073/volunteering/64/volunteering_with_city_of_york_council

Economy and Place services where volunteers are used

4. Sustainable Travel

Through the iTravel programme we work with a number of third parties who use volunteers on various projects:

- ‘Sustrans’ uses a number of volunteers to help maintain the cycle route network. Volunteers also work with Sustrans to help promote cycling more generally. Some of these volunteers are also coordinated through St Nicholas’ Fields.
- ‘York Health Walks’ organise the ‘Walking for Health’ programme. This was previously funded through the iTravel programme but now operates independently. c25 volunteers lead the walks.

- 'Bike Belles' runs social bike rides, bike maintenance workshops and cycling with tots' sessions. A majority of the individuals providing these sessions do so on a voluntary basis.

5. Community Transport

Part of the grant given by the Council to "York Wheels" is a contribution to funding their 'volunteer car scheme'. Again, this is not direct use of volunteers by the Council, but 28 individuals provide this important service which enables elderly and infirm residents to stay in their own homes.

6. Public Rights of Way Survey work

5-6 volunteers regularly give their time (every May and November) to undertake the Best Value Performance Indicator rights of way survey. This consists of a random survey of 25% of the York rights of way network.

7. Use of volunteers – Public Protection

The use of 'volunteers' in Public Protection is currently limited, but something we are keen to expand upon.

8. Underage Sales

Trading Standards Officers use 16 and 17 year old 'volunteers' to attempt test purchases of age restricted products like alcohol, knives and tobacco products. Enforcement activity of this nature follows strict guidance and takes place on an ad hoc basis in response to complaints and intelligence about illegal sales. Typically this activity takes place only a few days per year. The 'volunteers' are typically the family of CYC staff and their friends.

9. Cold Calling Controlled Zones

The process for reviewing and introducing new Cold Calling Controlled Zones in the City which was introduced in October 2017 relies on the assistance of volunteers from the community. Volunteers check that householders in the zones are willing to turn away cold callers who attempt to sell goods and services to them. Officers are in the process of recruiting volunteers from the zones to assist in this process and it is too early to assess its effectiveness.

10. Air Quality Assessment

One of the areas officers believe 'volunteers' could provide significant assistance is collecting and replacing the diffusion tubes which are located on lamp posts around the city. The tubes – which are collected over two days each month - help give an indication of the air quality at those locations.

11. Numbers of registered volunteers:
- Gardeners – 112 In various parks – friends groups
 - Litter Pickers – 157 – individuals and groups- work over and above our visits
 - Lockers / Unlockers – 81- of various parks
 - Baliffs – 12
 - Goose Scarers – 8
 - Trail Builders – 7
 - Snow Wardens – 214
 - Balsam Bashers – 3
 - Leaf Blowers – 4
12. Some of these include the same people doing a number of roles. In addition we have transferred to volunteer management in the last 24 months - tennis courts, bowling and croquet greens, fishery management and allotment management.
13. We are also working with a number of community / volunteer groups to run use and care for buildings e.g. the 'Men's Shed' project in Hull Road Park, Community kiosk in Glen Gardens. This is a potential area for further expansion of volunteering.
14. Community input into green spaces is one of the key criteria of achieving the Green Flag award, so this approach greatly assists with retaining the award. The city currently has five Green Flag awards.

Recommendation

15. Members are asked to note and comment on the content of this report.

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Report Approved

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Wards Affected:

All

For further information please contact the author of the report

Annexes

Annex A: LGA publication 2016 “*Community action in local government: A guide for councillors and strategic leaders*”