
**Decision Session – Cabinet Member for
Crime and Stronger Communities**

24th May 2013

Report of the Assistant Director (Communities, Culture & Public Realm)

Promoting Volunteering

Summary

1. This report captures what the Council is doing in relation to volunteering especially the steps the authority is taking to promote volunteering and its benefits to staff and residents. Recommendations are made to ensure that a volunteering culture thrives both within the authority and more widely within York's communities.

Background

2. City of York Council has a long history of engaging with the residents of York to offer volunteer opportunities that benefit the individual and the corporate aims of the council. Many departments offer a broad range of opportunities from helping to run youth clubs through to stewarding at events and educating school children about the trees in York. There are many examples of good practice in volunteer management and the cost benefits to encouraging a volunteer culture are significant.

Volunteering Strategy:

3. In January 2011 Corporate Management Team approved a Council Volunteering Strategy. It outlined how the Council could improve its policies in order to manage volunteers more effectively and described the Council's aspiration to encourage staff to volunteer.

Volunteer Managers' Network:

4. The inaugural meeting of the Council's Volunteer Managers' Network took place in December 2011. The Volunteer Managers' Network meets quarterly and brings together staff from across the Council that manage volunteers. The network has been instrumental in driving forward policies and developments needed to address the issues outlined in the Councils' Volunteering Strategy.

It also enables volunteer managers from across the Council to share ideas and good practice.

5. The Volunteer Managers' Network had a number of issues that it wished to focus on when it first came together. There has been progress on a number of the issues which included:
 - Developing a Staff Volunteering Scheme
 - Developing volunteering resources and communication channels for Volunteer Managers in the council, e.g. COLIN
 - Developing an overall Communications Strategy for volunteering
 - Finalising the Volunteer Managers training programme and proposal for the authority
 - Establishing a baseline measurement for 2012 of the number of volunteer opportunities available in the council and cross-reference this with York CVS
 - Establishing a baseline measurement for the level of volunteering activity for council employees and residents from the Staff Health & Wellbeing Survey and the Big York Survey
 - Progressing the authority to become Board Members of York Cares

The York Charter for Volunteering:

6. The Director of Adults, Children & Education, on behalf of the Council, signed up to the York Charter for Volunteering in June 2012. The Charter is a framework for assessing and developing high quality volunteering programmes in the city. There are eight principles in the Charter:
 - **Contribution** – Volunteers are able to contribute to genuine achievements
 - **Quality** – The volunteer experience is of a high quality
 - **Safety** – Volunteers have a safe experience
 - **Enjoyment** – Volunteers are able to enjoy their experience
 - **Value** – Volunteers are valued and their contribution is properly recognised
 - **Voice** – Volunteers have a voice and all parties listen to one another
 - **Equality** – Volunteers are treated fairly, barriers to volunteering are removed and diversity is welcomed

- **Proportionality** – Volunteer paperwork and procedures are kept to the minimum necessary for the role.
7. York Council for Voluntary Services (York CVS) has developed an online York Charter for Volunteering Self Assessment Toolkit. Organisations can pay to register for the assessment and associated information and useful resources in relation to what is required for each standard.
 8. A self-assessment scoping exercise has been carried out to see how well the Council addresses the eight key principles. This exercise involved surveying managers regarding the extent to which they address the standards under each of the principles and how they do this. The findings were positive with only one of the standards not being addressed at all, 14 of the standards being addressed but with scope for improvement, and 17 of the standards being addressed well.
 9. The next step for the authority is to sign up to the York Charter for Volunteering Self-Assessment Toolkit to recognise formally our progress and gain access to resources that support our volunteer managers and volunteers. The resources will include examples of good practice, case studies, templates and information from organisations such as Volunteer England.
 10. Once the Council completes the York Charter for Volunteering Self-Assessment, it will be receive a baseline score with information that highlights what is being done well and identifies areas for further development. The authority will use this information to formulate an action plan for next steps in relation to the volunteering agenda.

Volunteer Manager Training:

11. Since 2012 the Council's Workforce Development Unit (WDU) has worked in partnership with York CVS to create and deliver a training course for volunteer managers. The course gives clear guidance on good practice for volunteer management to ensure the experience is a positive one for all involved. So far, the course has run twice and 24 volunteer managers have attended. Feedback from the attendees was very positive and work is ongoing to run a further course later this year.

Employee Volunteering Scheme:

12. Last year, the annual staff survey indicated that 23% of staff volunteer. In November 2012 the Corporate Management Team agreed proposals to introduce an Employee Volunteering Scheme.

All Council employees are now eligible to request paid time off to volunteer up to a maximum of one day per annum (pro rata for part time staff). This can be done as an individual as part of a personal development plan, or as a team to develop team skills.

13. Employee volunteering is promoted as part of the Council's learning and development offer to staff and is coordinated by the WDU. This recognises that volunteering can help achieve professional and personal development objectives.

Promoting Volunteering:

14. In order to promote the Employee Volunteering Scheme and the benefits of volunteering, the authority is working with York Cares and York CVS to hold a Volunteer Fair in West Offices in June 2013. This will be an opportunity for: national and local organisations to promote their volunteering opportunities to staff; the authority to raise awareness of the Employee Volunteering Scheme; and York Cares and York CVS to raise awareness amongst the Council's volunteer managers of how they can help them to ensure the volunteering experience is positive for both parties.
15. The Council works closely with CVS on the volunteer agenda and is a member of York Cares, a partnership of leading employers committed to make York a better place through employee-volunteering. York Cares can match up staff volunteers to appropriate volunteer opportunities across the city.

Engaging with Residents:

16. Last year the Council asked residents their views on a number of issues through the Big York Survey. Questions about volunteering were included in the survey and residents were asked if they volunteered, how often, and if not, would they like to volunteer and what stopped them from doing so. This year the questions have been developed further to ascertain what kinds of volunteering residents would be interested in doing so that we are able to signpost those residents who give us contact details to relevant volunteering opportunities within the council and through York CVS and York Cares.
17. The Council actively encourages York residents to engage with its services by volunteering, for example, Youth Support Services offer a wide range of opportunities for residents to volunteer to work with young people across the city from helping to run youth club sessions to acting as an appropriate adult in a police interview. Smarter York was also launched last year and encourages residents across the

city to join forces with the council and local communities to volunteer and help make York a beautiful place to live and work.

York Council for Voluntary Services (York CVS):

18. The Council works in partnership with York CVS and provides annual funding to the organisation. The main aim of York CVS is to support and develop the work of the voluntary sector in the City of York. Underlying this aim is the belief that people should have control over decisions which affect their own lives and the communities in which they live.

Valuing our Volunteers:

19. There are a number of volunteer awards that seek to recognise the contribution that volunteers make to the city and their achievements. These include the Lord Mayor's Shine Award for 5 to 14 year-olds, The Lord Mayor's York Award for 15 to 25 year-olds; we support the Community Pride Award run by The Press and Radio York and the York Cares Golden Moment Awards.

Consultation

20. Volunteer Managers have been engaged through the scoping exercise referred to in the paragraph above. With regard to staff, last year we asked staff a series of questions about volunteering in the annual Staff Health & Wellbeing Survey. The survey results showed that 23% of Council staff volunteer. This survey is being repeated in May 2013.
21. We also asked residents a series of questions about volunteering last year in the Big York Survey. The results showed that nearly half of respondents have given unpaid help in the last 12 months, with about one third doing so at least once a month. The Big York Survey is due to be repeated in June 2013 and the council has further developed the questions about volunteering to allow us to understand residents' volunteering aspirations in the city.

The Way Forward

22. Significant progress has been made since the Council's Volunteering Strategy was published in January 2011 but now, more than ever, there is a strong emphasis on the valuable work done by volunteers. Key recommendations are for the Council to:
 - Sign up to the York Charter for Volunteering Self-Assessment to ensure that resources are available to our Volunteer Managers to enable them to make continuous improvements in this area.

- Continue to hold the Volunteer Managers' Network meetings to ensure that volunteering is truly embedded within the organisation placing a focus on continual improvement. A work plan for this group will be informed by the internal self-assessment that we have completed and the formal sign-up to the York Charter for Volunteering Self-Assessment. New volunteer managers will be invited to attend once they have completed the volunteer manager training. We will work closely with York CVS to continue to develop the training for volunteer managers.
- Further develop key areas including:
 - consolidating volunteering information resources by bringing together all of the information available to Council staff via COLIN and the resources available through the York Charter for Volunteering
 - building on the work through the staff survey to understand the volunteering opportunities available to staff both internally and externally. As part of this we will monitor and evaluate the success of the Volunteer Fair for staff
- Ensure that volunteering remains a high profile agenda in the city by continuing to support volunteer award schemes and projects such as the recently introduced YorZone website that encourages 11-18 year olds to take up volunteering opportunities.
- Establish targets and outcomes for volunteering to help us monitor our progress. Areas will include increasing:
 - Our baseline rating through the York Charter for Volunteering Self-Assessment
 - The take up of staff volunteering schemes as measured in the staff survey
 - The take up of resident volunteering as measured in the Big York Survey
 - The take up of the Volunteer Manager training and the use of volunteer resources

Option and Analysis

23. There are no options associated with this report. By improving and developing our approach to the way the authority is working in relation to the volunteering agenda the outcomes will be:

- Staff and residents gain the benefits of volunteering from a social, wellbeing and self development perspective
- Staff and residents feel they are actively contributing to city / community life
- Staff and residents have access to opportunities to develop or learn skills that could lead on to other opportunities such as further education or employment
- Increased volunteering offers real opportunities to promote a sense of community.

Corporate Priorities

24. In embedding the volunteering agenda within the authority and promoting opportunities for our residents, it clearly contributes to the following corporate priorities:
- Create jobs and grow the economy
 - Build stronger communities
 - Protect vulnerable people

Implications

25. There are no Financial, Legal, Crime and Disorder, Information Technology, Property, Planning, or other implications.
26. **Human Resources:** Following our sign-up to the York Charter for Volunteering Self-Assessment, the results will indicate where we need to develop and refine our employment policies in relation to volunteering.
27. **Equalities:** The survey work will provide information about uptake of volunteering opportunities and barriers to take-up which will enable us to identify actions that we may take to improve equality of access.

Risk Management

28. There are no known risks associated with this report.

Recommendations

29. The Cabinet Member is asked to comment on the report and to:
- a. Endorse the way forward set out in paragraph 22
 - b. Consider how the Cabinet Member role might champion the city's volunteering agenda

Reason: To ensure that volunteering flourishes across the city.

Contact Details

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Mary Bailey, Head of Communities and Equalities	Report Approved	✓	Date 23.5.13.
Specialist Implications Officers:			
Wards Affected:			All ✓
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