

Wickham Market Parish Council

Report to full Council 18 November 2024 from the Staffing and Personnel Committee

Implementing the Council's Volunteer Policy

Background

Volunteers play a vital role in supporting the parish council and enhancing the village in their work. Most volunteers work to keep the cemetery well maintained or carry out work to enhance the landscape as part of the Green Gym. Others carry out ad-hoc litter picking, footpath maintenance, managing the flags and Christmas decorations around the Hill and setting up the larger markets. All of these activities are recognised by the parish council, and the people carrying these out are recognised as parish volunteers.

Wickham Market Parish Council's volunteer policy was adopted by the parish council at its 20 May 2024 meeting, and is on the council's web site. Some volunteers have asked if they are insured by the parish council in carrying out their volunteer work which has prompted a closer look at the policy by the Staffing and Personnel Committee and in particular its implementation to ensure all volunteers are fully protected in carrying out their tasks, that the parish council is adhering to its policy and it is therefore complying with the conditions of its insurance.

Conditions of the Volunteer Policy and Implementation Proposals

Conditions include:

- To appoint a Parish Council Volunteer Co-ordinator
- To be read alongside certain other parish council policies
- That volunteer work on behalf of the parish council must be authorised by the council in advance
- To ensure volunteers are trained and inducted for the task being undertaken
- That risk assessments are in place and carried out for the varied tasks

If these conditions are complied with then volunteers working on behalf of the parish council within the parish, and at the parish councils request, will be insured for public liability and employers liability. Certain expenses may be paid subject to prior approval by the parish council.

Implementation Proposals

1. Cllr French has offered to be the Co-ordinator with record keeping carried out by the Deputy Clerk. The co-ordinator will authorise all pre-submitted requests to carry out volunteer work if the conditions of the policy are met. He will also provide advice, consider requests for expenses for e.g. personal protective equipment, and regularly update the council on the ongoing or planned volunteer work. The Deputy Clerk will ensure the council's risk assessments are up to date, assess suitable training courses if

required and keep a confidential record system of individual volunteers names and when they carried out tasks.

2. Leaders of volunteer groups or ad-hoc activities will need to take personal responsibility for the induction of their volunteers prior to or at the commencement of volunteering tasks. This induction will include the following:
 - Signposting each volunteer to the council's Volunteer Policy and associated policies on Equality and Diversity (how to work with other volunteers), Data Protection (to be aware of record keeping of personal data), Health and Safety (essential information, including personal responsibility), the Complaints Policy (should an issue arise) and any other council policy if the Leader considers is appropriate for the task in hand. The Leader will ask each volunteer to read these policies and be satisfied this was done.
 - The Leader will also signpost each volunteer to the council's published risk assessments for the various volunteering task or tasks. The Leader will have a full working knowledge of the risk assessments and ensure they are considered and applied in advance of the volunteering activity, in conjunction with the volunteer(s) or in a dynamic way as the task varies or develops on the day.
 - The Leader will also consider what suitable training is required for each volunteer either in advance of the activity or as on-the-job training.
3. Leaders will need to seek authorisation from the council's Co-ordinator in advance of the volunteering activity being carried out. This could be in the form of a generic description of the type, extent and location of the volunteering task expected over a set period of time, or a more specific description of an ad-hoc task. In each case a list of the names of the expected volunteers should also be provided. In the event a new volunteer turns up to assist in a task then the Leader will carry out the induction and also record the volunteers name, address and contact details and provide these to the Deputy Clerk. If this is fully complied with then the pre-known volunteers and any new volunteers will be insured by the council.

Recommendation

The Staffing and Personnel Committee recommend that Wickham Market Parish Council recognise the valued work carried out by volunteers within the parish and agrees the implementation proposals as set out in this report to have immediate effect.