

Draft Volunteer Policy

1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out Welshpool Town Council's approach to volunteering, including the principles by which volunteers are engaged, supported and managed.

This policy aims to ensure that volunteering activities are safe, inclusive, well-managed and beneficial both to the community and to volunteers themselves, while protecting the Council, its staff and its volunteers.

2. Background

Welshpool Town Council recognises the valuable contribution that volunteers can make in supporting Council services, events, projects and community engagement activities.

Volunteers help strengthen community involvement and support the delivery of activities that benefit the town and its residents.

This policy is informed by Welsh Government guidance on volunteering and reflects best practice within town and community councils in Wales.

3. Definition of a Volunteer

A volunteer is an individual who undertakes activity on behalf of Welshpool Town Council freely and by choice, for the benefit of the community or public, and without financial gain.

Volunteers are not employees of the Council and do not have a contract of employment.

4. Scope of Volunteering

Volunteers may be involved on either short-term or one-off activities (roles lasting one month or less) or longer-term roles (roles lasting more than one month).

Volunteering activities may include, but are not limited to: - supporting Council-led events and activities; - assisting with community engagement and promotional work; - supporting specific projects approved by the Council.

5. Principles

Welshpool Town Council is committed to promoting volunteering opportunities where appropriate, ensuring volunteering is inclusive, safe and rewarding, valuing volunteers and recognising their contribution, and applying equality, safeguarding and health and safety standards to volunteering.

Volunteering is based on mutual trust and understanding. There is no legally binding obligation on either the volunteer or the Council to provide or continue volunteering opportunities.

6. Roles and Responsibilities

Overall responsibility for volunteering arrangements rests with the Town Clerk.

Each volunteer will have a named Council officer or appointed supervisor responsible for providing guidance, support and supervision, ensuring the volunteer understands their role, and addressing any concerns or issues.

Staff responsible for volunteers will have this responsibility reflected in their role description where appropriate.

7. Expectations of Volunteers

Volunteers are expected to: - act reliably, honestly and responsibly; - act as ambassadors for Welshpool Town Council; - comply with relevant Council policies and procedures; - follow health and safety instructions; - respect confidentiality; - avoid any behaviour that may bring the Council into disrepute.

8. What Volunteers Can Expect from the Council

Volunteers can expect: - clear information about their role and responsibilities; - appropriate induction, training and supervision; - a safe working environment and appropriate insurance cover; - respect, dignity and fair treatment; - reimbursement of agreed out-of-pocket expenses; - recognition and appreciation of their contribution; - the right to raise concerns or decline unreasonable requests.

9. Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment processes will be proportionate to the nature and length of the volunteering role.

For longer-term roles, volunteers will normally be asked to complete an application form and attend an informal meeting.

For short-term or event-based volunteering, a simplified application and briefing process will be used.

Volunteers under the age of 16 will only be accepted where appropriate safeguarding and supervision arrangements are in place.

10. Induction, Training and Support

Volunteers will receive an induction appropriate to their role, including health and safety information.

Ongoing support and supervision will be provided by the named supervisor.

11. Safeguarding

Welshpool Town Council is fully committed to safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children, young people and adults at risk, and expects all volunteers to share this commitment.

The Council recognises that some volunteering roles may involve contact with children or adults at risk, whether directly or indirectly, and that robust safeguarding arrangements are essential to protect service users, volunteers, staff and the Council.

Responsible Persons / Safeguarding Leads

The Town Clerk shall act as the Council's overall safeguarding lead and responsible person for volunteering activities.

Where appropriate, a named officer or event lead may be appointed as a Responsible Person for a specific project, service or event involving volunteers. The Responsible Person will act as the first point of contact for safeguarding concerns, ensure that safeguarding arrangements are in place and understood, ensure volunteers are appropriately briefed and supervised, and escalate concerns promptly to the Town Clerk.

Risk Assessment and Role Design

All volunteering roles will be risk assessed to identify any safeguarding risks.

Wherever possible, volunteering roles will be designed to minimise safeguarding risk, including avoiding one-to-one situations, ensuring activities take place in open or supervised environments, and providing clear boundaries around volunteer responsibilities.

Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS)

Volunteers may be asked to disclose unspent criminal convictions relevant to the role.

Where a volunteering role involves regulated activity, or where the Council considers it necessary to mitigate risk, an appropriate Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check will be required before the role commences.

Training and Awareness

Volunteers involved in roles with safeguarding implications will receive appropriate safeguarding information or training, proportionate to the role.

All volunteers will be informed of expected standards of behaviour, appropriate professional boundaries, and how and to whom safeguarding concerns should be reported.

Reporting Safeguarding Concerns

Any safeguarding concern, allegation or suspicion must be reported immediately to the Responsible Person or the Town Clerk.

Concerns will be recorded and managed in line with the Council's Safeguarding Policy and relevant statutory guidance. Where necessary, concerns will be referred to the appropriate statutory authorities.

Short-Term and Event-Based Volunteering

For short-term or event-based volunteering, safeguarding arrangements will be proportionate but must include a named Responsible Person, a safeguarding briefing, and clear reporting arrangements.

12. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Volunteers must treat all information obtained through their volunteering as confidential unless authorised otherwise.

Personal data will be handled in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the Council's Privacy Notice.

13. Expenses

Volunteers may claim reimbursement of reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, subject to prior agreement and submission of appropriate evidence.

14. Health and Safety

Volunteers are required to comply with the Council's Health and Safety Policy and any risk assessments relevant to their role.

15. Insurance

Volunteers are covered by the Council's public liability and other relevant insurance policies while undertaking authorised volunteering activities.

16. Use of Personal Vehicles

Volunteers using their own vehicles for Council activities must ensure appropriate insurance cover and provide evidence if requested.

17. Grievance and Conduct Issues

Volunteers are encouraged to raise concerns informally with their supervisor in the first instance.

Where necessary, concerns will be managed in line with the Council's grievance and complaints procedures.

The Council reserves the right to end a volunteering arrangement where issues cannot be resolved.

18. Ending Volunteering

Volunteers may stop volunteering at any time.

Where appropriate, volunteers may be invited to provide feedback on their experience.

19. Review

This policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if required by legislative or operational changes.