

## CABINET ITEM COVERING SHEET PROFORMA

**AGENDA ITEM**

**REPORT TO CABINET**

**10<sup>th</sup> SEPTEMBER 2015**

**REPORT OF CORPORATE  
MANAGEMENT TEAM**

### **CABINET DECISION**

**Portfolio (Access, Communities and Community Safety) – Lead Cabinet Member – Councillor Steve Nelson**

#### **VOLUNTEERING STRATEGY**

##### **Summary**

This report presents a Volunteering Strategy Framework for the Borough for endorsement by Cabinet. It details the research and findings to produce the strategy and details plans for implementation.

##### **Recommendations**

Cabinet is recommended to:

- i. Note the report
- ii. Endorse the content and approach
- iii. Cabinet request an update report in April 2016

##### **Reasons for the Recommendations/Decision(s)**

To obtain support through Cabinet for the endorsement of the Borough's Volunteering Strategy.

##### **Members' Interests**

Members (including co-opted Members) should consider whether they have a personal interest in any item, as defined in **paragraphs 9 and 11** of the Council's code of conduct and, if so, declare the existence and nature of that interest in accordance with and/or taking account of **paragraphs 12 - 17** of the code.

Where a Member regards him/herself as having a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 16** of the code, in any business of the Council he/she must then, **in accordance with paragraph 18** of the code, consider whether that interest is one which a member of the public, with knowledge of the relevant facts, would reasonably regard as so significant that it is likely to prejudice the Member's judgement of the public interest and the business:-

- affects the members financial position or the financial position of a person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code, or

- relates to the determining of any approval, consent, licence, permission or registration in relation to the member or any person or body described in **paragraph 17** of the code.

A Member with a personal interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, may attend the meeting but must not take part in the consideration and voting upon the relevant item of business. However, a member with such an interest may make representations, answer questions or give evidence relating to that business before the business is considered or voted on, provided the public are also allowed to attend the meeting for the same purpose whether under a statutory right or otherwise (**paragraph 19** of the code)

Members may participate in any discussion and vote on a matter in which they have an interest, as described in **paragraph 18** of the code, where that interest relates to functions of the Council detailed in **paragraph 20** of the code.

### **Disclosable Pecuniary Interests**

It is a criminal offence for a member to participate in any discussion or vote on a matter in which he/she has a disclosable pecuniary interest (and where an appropriate dispensation has not been granted) **paragraph 21** of the code.

Members are required to comply with any procedural rule adopted by the Council which requires a member to leave the meeting room whilst the meeting is discussing a matter in which that member has a disclosable pecuniary interest (**paragraph 22** of the code)

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**SUMMARY**

This report presents a Volunteering Strategy Framework for the Borough for endorsement by Cabinet. It details the research and findings to produce the strategy and details plans for implementation.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

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**DETAIL**

1. Following a number of questions from the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector (VCSE), members of the public and officers across the local authority in relation to arrangements around volunteering some research was undertaken to determine the issues and need.
2. The research (funded by SBC, Catalyst and Tees Valley Community Foundation) was comprehensive and sought the views and contributions of a wide range of people and organisations with an interest in, or experience of volunteering. It also sought out examples of practice elsewhere as well as presenting the landscape of volunteering across the borough at the time of the commission and exploring motivations for volunteering.
3. The findings from the research included a range of recommendations to help inform and shape a detailed volunteering strategy.
4. Recognising the financial climate within which the local authority and other public sector services are operating within it was agreed as a fundamental principle that any solution needed to be sustainable and was highly unlikely to include a 'traditional' volunteer bureau model. It was also agreed that solely relying on a digital solution wouldn't be fit for purpose at this time and neither would it meet all of the needs identified within the research.
5. At both national and local levels, volunteering is regarded as a key mechanism by which communities can be strengthened and civil society built. With the rising demand on services and economic pressures there is an enhanced need to look to local communities to provide some of the support they need themselves rather than depending on the state. Clearly, this isn't appropriate in all cases but there are numerous examples of success.

6. The research found that volunteers are thriving in our borough with lots of people giving their time to help others. Sometimes this is on a regular basis, sometimes infrequently and sometimes as a one-off activity. We also have lots of organisations both in the public sector and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector that use volunteers to help deliver their services. This work ranges from small neighbourhood based organisations with no paid staff through to large voluntary organisations and social enterprises delivering public sector contracts of significant scale and size. This activity covers all geographical areas of the borough as well as communities of interest and need.
7. From what we know the current routes into volunteering are generally via:
  - Direct contact with individual VCSE organisations and/or public sector organisations
  - Employer supported volunteering schemes
  - Through faith-based organisations
  - Viva Volunteer online portal
  - Word of mouth
  - Job Centre Plus
  - 'Do it' national web portal
8. The benefits and positive impact of volunteering for individuals, communities and organisations are well documented nationally in terms of social capital community and individual well-being and service delivery amongst other things. Locally the value of volunteers is routinely recognised and acknowledged through activity such as the Catalyst annual awards, Stockton Borough Council Civic Awards and similar community champion and sports volunteer awards through the local media.
9. However the research found that:
  - Currently there isn't a single route or co-ordinated approach in relation to the opportunities available for anybody who wants to start volunteering. An internet search using 'volunteering in Stockton-on-Tees' returns over 70,000 results and no obvious pathway through them all. The first non-sponsored result directs people to the Stockton Borough Council website which only provides details of how to find out about volunteering opportunities in the Council.
  - It's not always clear who is offering volunteering opportunities or who to approach
  - There is no single, common or legal definition of Volunteering
  - It's not easy to identify whether the opportunities on offer are suitable for the individual wanting to volunteer.
  - organisations who are approached by willing volunteers who don't currently have any opportunities are often turning people away without being able to identify and signpost them to other services or organisations.
  - Whilst most organisations have things in place to continue to support and develop volunteers this is varied. Some have a great deal of skill and expertise in volunteer recruitment, management, development and support and others don't have the resources to do it on a large scale
  - there isn't an obvious place for people to contact if they are simply thinking about volunteering and wondering if it is right for them and what sort of volunteer opportunity would they be best suited to
  - Estimates brought together from local and national surveys suggest across the Borough there are 58,000 people who have undertaken some voluntary activity with

around 23,000 people who are regular volunteers and 10,000 core volunteers of which only 3,000 are known to the VCSE

- One hour of a volunteers time equates to £11.09
- We also know that volunteering adds an immense amount of social value to our area and we believe it has a huge impact on both those who volunteer and those who they volunteer for but we haven't got any comprehensive or systematic way of capturing that and promoting it.

10. In 2009 Viva Volunteers was established by Tees Valley Community Foundation (TVCF) through a grant from the Central Area Partnership of the Local Strategic Partnership. It was set up in response to an identified need as a point of facilitated access and advice for individuals wishing to volunteer and looking for the right opportunity and also for organisations looking to recruit suitable volunteers. It built on the successful Professional Services Group (PSG) model within TVCF where organisations as part of their corporate social responsibility volunteered the time of professionals to support voluntary organisations. TVCF sustained Viva Volunteers beyond the life of the original grant through to December 2014 when, as part of their business remodelling, they changed the facilitated access and advice to an online portal linking to the national Do-it.org website.

### **Proposal**

11. Whilst the commissioned research identified models of practice elsewhere, many included resource intensive traditional models of face-to-face brokerage services which are unsustainable without a clear long term funding strategy or business development model in place. The strategy is therefore based on an initial delivery plan formulated around a more sustainable framework model (See appendix 1). The framework picks up all of the elements identified in the research with actions culminating in a month long programme of activity during June each year, as a local extension of the national Volunteers Week (first week in June). Should the need for face-to-face brokerage continue an element of the delivery plan for the Steering Group could include the development and delivery of a funding strategy or establishment of separate VCSE enterprise, backed by a sustainable business model.
12. Oversight of delivery of the plan will be led by a Volunteering Steering Group managed by Catalyst as the VCSE infrastructure organisation for the borough. The Steering Group will be supported by a wider group of stakeholders and contributors operating as 'task and finish' groups as needed around the elements of the framework. SBC will have a place on the Steering Group.
13. It is also proposed that a small element of the Market Development Fund is 'ring-fenced' as match funding to implement the model.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

14. The actions are to be met through existing services and budgets and /or secured external funding.

### **LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

15. There are no legal implications arising from this report.

### **RISK ASSESSMENT**

16. The development of the Volunteering is categorised as low to medium risk. Existing management systems and daily routine activities are sufficient to control and reduce the risk.

## **COUNCIL PLAN THEMES**

17. The Volunteering Strategy supports the Stronger Communities theme within the Council Plan.

## **EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

18. N/A

## **CONSULTATION INCLUDING WARD/COUNCILLORS**

19. N/A but will take to a future members policy seminar.

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