

The background of the slide features a large, faint, light blue watermark of the City of Vancouver coat of arms. The crest includes a crown with four maple leaves, a shield divided into four quadrants (top-left: a ship, top-right: a stag, bottom-left: a ship, bottom-right: an eagle), and a banner at the bottom with the motto "A NE FOR A".

Agenda Item 10

Employee Volunteering Policy

Falkirk Council

Title: Employee Volunteering Policy
Meeting: Executive Committee
Date: 15 January 2019
Submitted By: Director of Corporate & Housing Services

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. An Employee Volunteering Policy has been developed to encourage and assist employees to volunteer locally and to support the Council in engaging with the local community.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Executive approve the Employee Volunteering Policy for immediate implementation.

3. Background

- 3.1 As part of the Council's locality planning responsibilities, the Community Planning Partnership works in full partnership with local communities to identify and resolve local inequalities and priority issues. This brings local people together with Elected Members and Community Planning partners to work on a common programme of solutions for local issues. An example of this is currently underway in Grangemouth.
- 3.2 To further develop this, we have been looking at what other partnerships do to deepen their locality planning approach. One option has been to develop volunteering schemes, either structured or less formal, where the Council and/or partner volunteers give at least one day back of their time to do voluntary work with the aim of improving local outcomes. This has been identified as a potential area for development within the Falkirk Community Planning Partnership.
- 3.3 To progress this within the Council, consideration has been given to an Employee Volunteering policy. This is considered to be a good vehicle to both assist in building relationships within the local community, and to allow employees to support a charity/service that may be of interest/important to them. This type of policy has been adopted by other Councils e.g.: West Lothian and North Ayrshire and a few others, within whom benchmarking has been undertaken.

- 3.4 Providing employees one paid day per year to volunteer (pro rata for part time employees) is a positive mechanism to support locality planning. It could improve employee morale and should help increase employee engagement. Importantly, it will benefit the local community by providing support, whilst also allowing the development of increased skills and resources.

4. Considerations

- 4.1. The proposal within the policy attached as appendix 1, is to provide employees with the option to take 1 days paid leave per year on which they will volunteer for a local initiative which supports the Falkirk area. Allowing an employee time off will impact on their immediate team. This however, needs to be balanced with the positive impact of the voluntary time spent with the local charity/service and the benefits to the local community. Backfill will not always be required and will be dependent on the employee's post.
- 4.2. The introduction of the policy will not create any additional administration in the longer term. It will simply be another category of leave that employees can request to be approved. Initially the creation of a new leave category on myview (the employee self serve leave tool) will be required. In seeking the leave for volunteering, the employee will be required to name the organisation for whom they will be providing voluntary work. This should provide a future indication of the organisations that have benefited from this policy.
- 4.3. At a time when we are reducing budgets and considering how we modernise our workforce package, this is a positive step for employees, which also benefits our local communities. Consideration does however, need to be given to the possible negative public perception of giving employees paid time off to undertake volunteering work.

5. Consultation

- 5.1. The concept of employee volunteering has been raised by several individuals. The policy has been discussed with Services and Trade Unions with comments having been taken on board.

6. Implications

Financial

- 6.1 There will be a cost to the Council as we are offering a day's paid leave per year per full time employee. However, it is acknowledged that not all employees will utilise this policy and by allowing those who do wish to volunteer, the time off should be of benefit to the local community. It should also support the further development of community engagement.

- 6.2 There may be some costs associated with backfill, however not all posts will require backfill. In some teams, a day off will not be back filled and will reduce productivity. The positive impact however, on morale and on the overall workforce package needs to be considered in this context; as do the community benefits.

Resources

- 6.2 As with any leave request, managers need to consider any resource issues prior to approving a volunteering request.

Legal

- 6.3 There are no legal issues arising from this policy.

Risk

- 6.4 There may be a negative public perception about giving employees paid time off to volunteer, at a time when the Council is consulting on budget cuts. This could be mitigated by careful promotion of the policy and publicising good news stories of employees that have volunteered.

Equalities

- 6.5 The policy is open to all employees with contracts over 12 months in duration. Some services may be unable to promote this where cover is required but can not be secured, or where no budget is available for backfill. Uptake of the policy will be monitored.
- 6.6 Volunteering could have a positive effect for local equalities groups if they benefit from the skills and experience of employee volunteers.

Sustainability/Environmental Impact

- 6.7 A sustainability/environmental impact assessment was not required.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 An Employee Volunteering Policy would be a positive addition to our workforce policies and benefits package as it supports our employees to volunteer time with a local charity/service and fosters good relationships between Falkirk Council and the community we serve. It also promotes the work being done to enhance community engagement.

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Appendices

1. Employee Volunteering Policy

List of Background Papers:

None

Employee Volunteering

make it happen

council of the future

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The Employee Volunteering policy will assist employees who are looking to volunteer in the Falkirk Council community.

Purpose

Volunteering is about giving your time and skills, for the benefit of others, the local community and very importantly yourself.

The purpose of employee volunteering is for the Council to increase resilience, add value and build relationships within the local community. By giving your time you're helping your chosen charity or organisation and in turn helping the people and communities of Falkirk become more self reliant.

Employee Volunteering

Benefits

Volunteering has huge benefits both for you and for the community.

Volunteering can:

- Help you be part of the community
- Help you learn new skills and experience
- Help you gain confidence and provides an opportunity to try something new
- Have a real and valuable impact on people, communities and society in general
- Help you meet different types of people
- Improve your morale, physical health and work-life balance
- Be fun!

Who can get involved?

Employees who have a permanent or temporary post can apply for up to 1 day per calendar year to volunteer. 96% attendance is normally required before your volunteering time off will be agreed. Managers can also consider contract duration for temporary contracts – usually 12 months or longer would be required to obtain the full day, although managers can be flexible depending on the circumstances.

What projects can I support?

You can support any charity or Falkirk Council service that operates within the Falkirk Council area. For example, care homes, day centres, schools, Samaritans of Falkirk and Central Scotland, mentoring or befriending activities, or any other locally focussed activity. Any activities which cannot be shown to be of benefit to the local community, such as organisations who look to make profit, volunteering to support a friend or family member, will not qualify under this scheme.

You should not participate in any activities that could be in conflict to your Falkirk Council role or one which may impact on your health and wellbeing. Your manager can support you in helping consider whether any areas may represent a conflict.

Expenses/Equipment

We will not pay any expenses you may have through the volunteering activity. We will not provide or pay for any equipment required for your chosen volunteering role. You should discuss this with the organisation that you are volunteering with as they may offer to pay reasonable expenses.

Employee Volunteering

Health & Safety

It is your responsibility to ensure you are meeting all health and safety standards, no matter the type of volunteering arrangement you choose to do. You should ensure that the organisation that you are volunteering with has sufficient insurance cover for the role that you undertake.

Time off

Employees will be granted paid time off to attend all types of volunteering activities up to a maximum of 1 day (pro-rata for part time staff) per calendar year i.e. January to December. The 1 day (or pro-rata time) does not require to be taken on a single day. It can be split across a number of occasions, up to the equivalent of 1 day, if this is more beneficial to the volunteering activity.

Employee requests to undertake volunteering

If you wish to take part in the volunteering, you should speak to your line manager about your request and then request the leave on myview. This can be found under “Request New Paid Special Leave” and selecting “FC Community Volunteering” from the drop down list of reasons. It is essential that you complete the comments box with the name of the charity/organisation where you will volunteer. Your manager will not approve the leave unless the comments box is completed.

If you do not have access to myview you will need to complete the Application for Employee Volunteering Form [include link to form] and discuss it with your line manager.

Approval of time off will be subject to the needs of the Service. Falkirk Council will support as many requests as possible however there may be times that this cannot be accommodated for the following reasons:

- Has a negative impact on the business and service needs
- Work within the service cannot be re-arranged to accommodate the employees varied hours
- The cost of cover would be too great

An application should be submitted for each occasion on which you wish to volunteer, up to the maximum of 1 day per year for a full time employee (pro-rata for part time).

Approved Volunteering

The decision of your application will be confirmed via myview.

If you submitted an application form, your manager will advise you of their decision. Line Managers – please note it is your responsibility to submit the request on myview

Employee Volunteering

on behalf of the employee and then scan the completed application form to hrhelpdesk@falkirk.gov.uk

Refused Volunteering

Where a request is declined, your manager will provide some justification for the refusal.

Receiving a refusal does not prevent you from requesting time off to volunteer in the future.

Review and Raising Awareness

In advance of and after any volunteering work, employees should raise awareness of the volunteering activity, using yammer. Where possible, photos of volunteering activities should be shared on yammer. Employees should also share information about their volunteering experience at their team meeting.