

	<p><b>BODMIN TOWN COUNCIL</b></p> <p><b>POLICY: VOLUNTEERS</b></p>
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**APPROVAL:**

	Date	Minute Reference
Approved by Policy & Resources Committee:	26/08/2021	PR/2021/109
Adopted by Full Council:	26/08/2021	PR/2021/109
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**REVISION SUMMARY:**

Revision Date	New Version Number	Summary of Changes



## **BODMIN TOWN COUNCIL VOLUNTEERS POLICY**

### **1. POLICY OVERVIEW**

1.1 This policy applies to all volunteers engaged by Bodmin Town Council. Some aspects of this policy also apply to volunteers from community groups and not-for profit organisations working in partnership with Bodmin Town Council to deliver projects for Bodmin.

1.2 This policy is not intended for Councillors who are specifically covered in the Councillor Code of Conduct Policy or for staff employed by Bodmin Town Council.

### **2. WHY DO WE INVOLVE VOLUNTEERS?**

2.1 Bodmin Town Council exists to provide services for those living and working in Bodmin. These include parks and open spaces, markets, cemeteries, and public toilets. Volunteers are valued contributors to the Council's work, providing manpower, new skills, and perspectives, and increasing engagement with the local community.

2.2 We strive for a mutually beneficial relationship which brings added value to both the Council and the community, whilst recognising the motivations and objectives of volunteers.

### **3. WHY DO WE NEED A VOLUNTEERING POLICY?**

3.1 We want volunteers to feel supported in a way that reflects the values of the Council, and to achieve this it is important to set out how the partnership is designed to work. The relationship we have with volunteers is non-contractual, and no working relationship is created or implied at any time, however we still feel it is important to have clear, reasonable guidelines to manage expectations and help things to run smoothly.

### **4. PRINCIPLES OF THE POLICY**

4.1 We appreciate that volunteers contribute their time, skills, and knowledge freely for many reasons and we will support personal aspirations and professional ambitions wherever possible and appropriate.

4.2 We value volunteers and recognise that they should have satisfying tasks that are personally fulfilling, as well as the support, training, and equipment to do these tasks effectively and safely.

4.3 We will create an environment of understanding among staff and councillors to ensure that they work positively with volunteers.

4.4 Bodmin Town Council must show the community sectors that they are mutually understood, acknowledged, and respected, treating volunteers with honesty through open communication, transparency, and integrity.

## 5. VOLUNTEERING WITH US

5.1 The energy and commitment of people giving their time for the public good contributes to a vibrant society and should be recognised and appreciated. Bodmin Town Council has forged excellent relationships with many of the town's community groups, charities and individual volunteers. Indeed, without these organisations the council would not be able to deliver many of its projects effectively.

### 5.2 Equality and Diversity – Who can volunteer?

We want to be as inclusive as possible and will not discriminate based on any protected characteristics, namely: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation.

We welcome volunteers from all backgrounds, recognising that having a broad, diverse group of volunteers brings a variety of knowledge, skills, creativity, and experience, and promotes social and community cohesion. People's individual circumstances differ, but this should not prevent people from being able to contribute to their community. Therefore, we aim to identify and remove barriers to volunteering. For example, where a volunteer might need additional help with equipment, or a flexible commitment to fit around other obligations, we will endeavour to support such requests where practical.

There may be occasions when a person is not suitable for a specific role, for example for reasons of Health & Safety, or where a role involves children or vulnerable people. Where this is the case, we will be open to making reasonable adjustments or to looking at options such as additional support. Where it is not possible to place a volunteer in their requested role, we will seek to find a suitable alternative. Discussions when placing volunteers will always be open, unbiased, and involve all concerned.

### 5.3 Criminal Convictions - Can people with criminal convictions volunteer?

Having a criminal record will not necessarily prevent anyone from volunteering with us but this depends on the nature of the volunteer role and the nature and circumstances of the offences. Most of our roles do not require a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check and if it is not needed, we will not do one. Where a role does require a DBS check we will make that clear from the start. Unless the role requires us to ask questions about a full criminal record, we only ask about unspent convictions as defined in the Rehabilitation of Offenders Act 1974. All information given to us is handled, stored, and destroyed in accordance with GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) and our Data Protection Policy.

### 5.4 Additional Support Needs - Is any extra support available?

Volunteers who have additional support requirements will be considered wherever possible and we will make reasonable adjustments, where practical, to ensure our opportunities are accessible to those with additional needs. We will consider the nature of the role, availability of supporting staff, availability of specialised equipment, health and safety, the welfare of the individual and any other considerations applicable to the role or the volunteer. Discussion will be as open and fair as possible. In some cases,

alternative roles might be offered instead. Where links to other support agencies might help a person to volunteer, the Council aims to support this. All personal information will be confidential and handled, stored, and destroyed in accordance with GDPR and the Council's Data Protection Policy.

## **6. HOW WE SUPPORT VOLUNTEERS**

### 6.1 Induction, Training and Support – What can volunteers expect from us?

New volunteers will be made welcome and given:

- a brief description of the Council and/or partner organisation and its values
- task-related training to enable them to fulfil their role
- any other appropriate training including Health and Safety
- guidelines and discussion on relevant procedures, code of conduct and confidentiality.

All volunteers will be given:

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and protective clothing as required, or where a reasonable request is made (see 'Volunteering with Us' section),
- regular supervision,
- opportunity to discuss tasks, identify and resolve any problems and to be given thanks,
- regular role reviews to ensure the needs of the Council and the volunteer continue to be met,
- opportunity to share ideas and input in the development of their role,
- where available, development opportunities appropriate to the role,
- opportunity to feedback to the Council and to be involved in the development of volunteering policy.

All volunteers can expect:

- to be treated with respect,
- to be appreciated,
- to have a voice in discussions and decisions that directly affect them.

### 6.2 Health and Safety - How do we keep volunteers safe?

We have a duty of care to all staff and volunteers will be given information and training on how to carry out their role to ensure their own and other's safety. A risk assessment for each volunteer role will be carried out.

For roles managed by the Council, these will be undertaken by the relevant Head of Service or the Health & Safety Responsible Officer. Where the volunteer role is managed by an external community or voluntary group, the risk assessment will be carried out by the group, with a copy submitted to the Council. In this case, support to complete the risk assessment can be given by the Town Council on request. In the case of a volunteer requiring additional support, a specific risk assessment will be required for that individual to take account of their capabilities or additional requirements. Volunteers can request a copy of the risk assessment undertaken for their role, task, or personal requirements (where applicable) at any time.

### 6.3 Insurance - How are volunteers covered?

Volunteers, whether individuals or volunteering as part of a group, who are engaged in tasks directly managed by Bodmin Town Council are fully protected by our personal accident and public liability insurance. Those volunteering through independent

voluntary or community groups who self-manage will need to check that their organisation has suitable cover before volunteering.

If there is no suitable insurance cover in place for a particular task, this should be brought to the attention of the Town Council before any task starts so that appropriate cover can be arranged. Volunteers who are required to use their cars as part of their volunteering, not including travel to and from a place of volunteering, must inform their own insurers to arrange suitable cover. This doesn't usually incur a charge, but in the unlikely event that it does, and if the cost would impact the volunteer's ability to volunteer, this should be brought to the attention of the Council.

## **7. VOLUNTEER CODE OF CONDUCT**

### 7.1 How should volunteers behave?

The welfare and personal security of employees, volunteers and Councillors is of the utmost importance. Volunteers represent the Council and should do this by having respect for all people and conducting themselves in a way which reflects the values of the Council.

This expectation includes conduct towards other volunteers, staff, and members of the public. It also includes a volunteer's online conduct, where applicable, in line with our Social Media Procedure document.

## **8. DATA PROTECTION AND CONFIDENTIALITY**

### 8.1 What can be discussed with others?

Volunteers may have access to personal data or gain sensitive knowledge about the work of the Council, volunteers, staff, Councillors, organisations, community groups or clients who have contact with the Council.

There is an absolute obligation, both during and after volunteering with us, to maintain confidentiality and not to pass on information to any individual or third-party organisation unless required to do so by law. Volunteers using Council computers are expected to observe the Council's IT Policy and all volunteers are required to observe the Council's Data Protection Policy. Principles laid out in the Social Media Procedures document also apply.

## **9. TROUBLESHOOTING**

### 9.1 What if a problem arises?

We are all human and recognise that problems can arise. All volunteers can expect to be supported by the Nominated Council Officer. We will have an open-door policy in place, to assist with any complications arising with volunteers and community groups, in a fair and open way.

In the event of a conflict, whether between volunteers or between volunteers and staff, we aim to resolve any problems informally wherever possible and in a timely, fair, and effective way. The Nominated Council Officer will be made available to discuss any concerns safely and in confidence.

Volunteers are encouraged to address problems about any aspect of their volunteering as promptly as possible, to enable quick solutions and minimise risk of issues escalating. In the event of any disagreement, volunteers are encouraged to:

1. Discuss the issue with the person concerned to see if a solution can be found.
2. If the matter is not easily resolved, raise the problem with the Nominated Council Officer.
3. If a satisfactory outcome cannot be reached, the problem may then be brought to the attention of the Town Clerk who will investigate and decide on an appropriate response. In the event of a serious complaint, or inappropriate or dangerous behaviour, the Council's Nominated Officer will discuss this directly with the Town Clerk and decide on the appropriate action to take.

Volunteers can bring another person of their choice to any meeting for support. Volunteers are not contracted and are free to leave at any time.

Equally the Council also reserves the right to ask a volunteer to leave if this is in the best interest of the volunteer, the Council, or the volunteer group. In any case we will act fairly and openly. All data gathered during any dispute will be collated, stored, and destroyed in line with our Data Protection Policy.

## **10. RIGHT TO LEAVE**

### 10.1 What if I want to leave?

We keep in mind that volunteers give their time freely and that circumstances, availability, motivation, and interests may change. Volunteers are free to leave at any time and are not required to give a reason, although a reason can help us to understand and address any issues.

We always appreciate notice wherever possible; not just so we can reallocate tasks, but to give us opportunity to support the volunteer's next steps where appropriate, and to say thank you for their contribution. It also gives us time to ask for feedback, so that we can understand what we are doing well and where we might improve what we are doing, for the benefit of future volunteers.