

	<h2>General Functions Committee</h2> <h3>18 February 2016</h3>
<p style="text-align: right;">Title</p>	<p>Employer Supported Volunteering</p>
<p>Report of</p>	<p>Stephen Evans, Director of Strategy and Communications</p>
<p>Wards</p>	<p>All</p>
<p>Status</p>	<p>Public</p>
<p>Urgent</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Key</p>	<p>No</p>
<p>Enclosures</p>	<p>Appendix 1: ESV Policy Appendix 2: ESV Line Manager Guidance</p>
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<h2>Summary</h2>
<p>On the 25 June 2014 Members of the Community Leadership Committee agreed aims, objectives and proposals for development of a Community Participation Strategy and on 11 March 2015, Members agreed a detailed implementation plan. The implementation plan consists of six workstreams, to be delivered by September 2016. Workstream Two of the Community Participation Strategy includes the introduction of an Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) scheme, which puts Barnet Council staff in contact with volunteering opportunities in the borough.</p>
<p>The ESV scheme in Barnet follows a similar model in place across many Government departments which encourage staff to volunteer as part of their employment. The proposed ESV scheme has been considered by the Workforce Board, and Barnet Council employees have had an opportunity to comment through a 30 day consultation. The proposed ESV scheme states that, subject to the agreement of the line manager:</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Barnet Council staff will be able to take up to 2 days of paid volunteering leave per annum, (pro rata for part time staff); • The timing of which is to be agreed in advance with the line manager; • The policy is not compulsory and employees will not be required to take the 2 days if they do not wish to do so;

- Volunteering will be recognised in Barnet's staff appraisal system;
- Volunteering opportunities will be sourced for staff, if required;
- Opportunities through this policy will focus on volunteering with Barnet charities for the benefit of Barnet residents.

All volunteering opportunities will be based in Barnet, given the schemes dual aims of benefitting both staff and the wider borough. Groundwork – one of the council's contracted providers supporting engagement with the voluntary sector – will provide a professional brokerage service which puts staff and teams wishing to volunteer in contact with local opportunities.

Groundwork will work closely with the council to identify volunteering opportunities within the borough which are aligned with the corporate priorities of the council, such as social care.

The ESV scheme will be launched internally to Barnet's workforce on 1 March 2016, with Groundwork providing pop-up outreach sessions which will promote agreed opportunities.

Recommendation

- 1. That the General Functions Committee agrees the establishment of an Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) Scheme for Barnet Council and approves the ESV policy (attached as Appendix 1 to the committee report) together with the ESV line manager guidance (attached as Appendix 2 to the committee report).**

1. WHY THIS REPORT IS NEEDED

- 1.1 Barnet has substantial community capacity as a borough. 92% of residents agree that they help their neighbours out when needed and 26% volunteer regularly – weekly or monthly (Residents' Perception Survey, Spring 2015). Voluntary and community groups are not the only forms of community capacity in the Borough – both individuals and businesses have a vital role to play. The Community Participation Strategy aims to support residents, voluntary and community groups, and businesses to be empowered, independent and active agents in their local areas.
- 1.2 On the 25 June 2014 Members of the Community Leadership Committee agreed aims, objectives and proposals for development of a Community Participation Strategy and on 11 March 2015, Members agreed a detailed implementation plan. The implementation plan agreed by the Committee consists of six workstreams, to be delivered by September 2016.
- 1.3 Workstream Two of the Community Participation Strategy includes the introduction of an Employer Supported Volunteering scheme.
- 1.4 Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) provides employees the opportunity to volunteer with support from their employer, whether this is in the form of

time off for individual volunteering or in a programme developed by the employer such as a team challenge event or on-going arrangement with a community partner.

- 1.5 The policy replicates a similar scheme which has been in operation for many years across Whitehall departments and is in line with Government plans to introduce a new obligation requiring public sector employers and companies with more than 250 employees to give staff up to three days a year to do voluntary work.
- 1.6 The ESV scheme unlocks the substantial capacity of the council's [c1,800] workforce for local community benefit. The ESV scheme allows the council to lead by example in order to promote similar schemes to, and share learning with, other local employers.
- 1.7 Following a 30 day consultation with staff, the Workforce Board agreed a proposed ESV scheme for Barnet Council's employees on 13 January 2016. The proposed ESV states that, subject to the agreement of the line manager:
 - Barnet staff will be able to take up to 2 days of paid volunteering leave per annum, (pro rata for part time staff);
 - The timing of which is to be agreed in advance with the line manager;
 - The policy is not compulsory and employees will not be required to take the 2 days if they do not wish to do so;
 - Volunteering will be recognised in Barnet's staff appraisal system;
 - Volunteering opportunities will be sourced for staff, if required;
 - Opportunities through this policy will focus on volunteering with Barnet charities for the benefit of Barnet residents.
- 1.8 The full draft policy and line manager guidance can be found in Appendix 1 and Appendix 2, respectively.
- 1.9 All volunteering opportunities will be based in Barnet, given the schemes dual aims of benefitting both staff and the wider borough. Groundwork – one of the council's contracted providers supporting engagement with the voluntary sector – will provide a professional brokerage service which puts staff and teams wishing to volunteer in contact with local opportunities.
- 1.10 Groundwork will work closely with the council to identify volunteering opportunities within the borough which are aligned with the corporate priorities of the council, such as social care.
- 1.11 This policy will be reviewed after one year to ensure that it is operating in the way that was originally intended.

2. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 The council's Corporate Plan 2015-2020 has an objective to create 'more involved, resilient communities'. Increasing community participation, engagement and involvement will be an essential part of the change the Council will need to achieve over the next five years. The ESV scheme is an opportunity to exhibit these values and benefits to residents and local businesses.
- 2.2 The ESV scheme will also promote stronger relationships between the Council and the local community, particularly by strengthening staff's local citizenship role as 'ambassadors' for the Council, and the Council's reputation with residents.

3. ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND NOT RECOMMENDED

- 3.1 This proposal arises from a resolution of the Community Leadership Committee and seeks to give effect to [Workstream Two of the Community Participation Strategy](#) namely the introduction of an Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) scheme. Consequently, alternative options have not been considered in the context of this report.

4. POST DECISION IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 It is proposed that the Employer Supported Volunteering (ESV) scheme be implemented by 1st March 2016 and the Commissioning Group will be responsible for ensuring implementation.

5. IMPLICATIONS OF DECISION

5.1 Corporate Priorities and Performance

- 5.1.1 The council's Corporate Plan 2015-2020 has an objective to create 'more involved, resilient communities', arguing that:

Greater community participation, engagement and involvement will be an essential part of the change the Council will need to achieve over the next five years.

The Council will work with residents to increase self-sufficiency, reduce reliance on statutory services, and make the best possible use of community strengths and knowledge to tailor services to need.

The Council's vision is to develop a new relationship with residents that enable them to be independent and resilient and to take on greater responsibility for their local areas. This is not about the Council shifting its responsibility to residents – it is about recognising that residents want to be more involved in what happens in their local areas.

- 5.1.2 The Employer Supported Volunteering scheme will promote stronger relationships between the Council and the local community, particularly by

strengthening staff's local citizenship role as 'ambassadors' for the Council, and the Council's reputation with residents.

5.2 Resources (Finance & Value for Money, Procurement, Staffing, IT, Property, Sustainability)

5.2.1 Line Manager guidance states that whilst Barnet Council will endeavour to agree volunteering requests, managers are entitled to turn down requests should they be deemed unreasonable or will prevent the demands on the department being met.

5.2.2 The brokerage service from Groundwork will be provided through an existing contract and will not incur any additional costs.

5.3 Social Value

5.3.1 The ESV scheme has the potential to enhance employee skills and improve relations between staff and the local community. Restricting the ESV scheme to opportunities in the borough will also ensure that the benefits of volunteering are shared within the borough, in priority areas such as social care.

5.4 Legal and Constitutional References

5.4.1 Under [Section 15A of the Constitution](#) – Responsibility for Functions Annex A – staff matters (i.e. salaries and conditions of service) are a function of the General Functions Committee. As the proposal is to allow staff 2 days off per year to carry out volunteering work, the decision maker will be the General Functions Committee.

5.5 Risk Management

Risk	Mitigation
Staff may perceive volunteering as a burden.	Establish clear policies which set out the rationale and benefits of ESV, and emphasise the voluntary nature of the benefit.
Staff may take advantage of the additional 2 days volunteering leave without volunteering.	Line manager approval and evidence of volunteering will be required.
Volunteering organisations may not have sufficient liability insurance.	Groundwork will seek assurance from organisations involved with the brokerage service. Individuals organising their own volunteering opportunity will need to provide evidence to their line manager of appropriate liability insurance.

5.6 Equalities and Diversity

5.6.1 The ESV scheme is available to all Barnet Council employees. The implementation of the policy will be monitored to ensure all groups have the opportunity to take up part in the scheme.

5.7 Consultation and Engagement

5.7.1 Formal consultation with managers commenced on the 9th December to gather thoughts as to how practical the policy will be to implement and their also their thoughts on what will be useful in terms of guidance to managers. A further opportunity for wider staff to provide feedback was provided through the intranet and First Team on 23rd December 2015.

5.7.2 Twelve individuals provided a response to the consultation, with all respondents highlighting their approval of the scheme. All responses to the consultation can be found in Appendix 1.

5.7.3 Information added to the policy as a result of the consultation includes;

- Liability;
- Health and Safety;
- Time period for the policy.

5.8 Insight

5.8.1 N/A

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

6.1 [Developing a community participation strategy for Barnet](#), Community Leadership Committee, June 25 2014

6.2 [Developing a Community Participation Strategy: Implementation Plan](#), Community Leadership Committee, March 11 2015