



Coxhoe Parish Council

Volunteers' Policy

Date: January 2021

Review Date: January 2023

Volunteer Policy

This policy sets out the broad principles for volunteering for Coxhoe Parish Council. This policy has been adopted by full council. The policy will be reviewed every 2 years to ensure that it remains up-to-date and relevant to the volunteering needs of our organisation.

Our Commitment

Coxhoe Parish Council acknowledges that volunteers contribute in many different ways, and that volunteering can benefit users of our services, paid staff, other volunteers and the wider community. We value the contributions made by volunteers and we are committed to involving volunteers in appropriate roles, and in ways which are supportive of the volunteers and beneficial to our organisation.

We see volunteers as people who, unpaid and of their own free will, contribute their time, energy, skills and experience to benefit our organisation and the wider community. We also acknowledge the unique contribution that volunteers make and the importance of a mutually beneficial relationship where the volunteer also gets something from the volunteering role as well.

Our Values

Coxhoe Parish Council is committed to volunteering and we will:

- not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff. Their role will complement the role of paid staff, be beneficial to the organisation and the volunteers this includes ensuring that volunteers are not used during any times of industrial action to do the work of paid staff;
- ensure volunteers have a defined place in the structure of the organisation;
- take appropriate steps to ensure that paid staff are clear about the role of volunteers, and to foster good working relationships between paid staff and volunteers;
- recognise that the volunteer role is a 'gift relationship' – no enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks involved in their volunteering role. Likewise our organisation is not compelled to provide regular work or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken by the volunteer;
- acknowledge mutual support and reliability – our expectations of volunteers and volunteers' expectations of our organisation;
- acknowledge and value the individual skills, knowledge and experience that each volunteer brings to our organisation.

Coordination of Volunteering

All volunteers will have a nominated paid member of staff or a volunteer to offer guidance and advice to help the volunteer carry out their role effectively. The nominated post holder/person with overall responsibility for the development of volunteering within our organisation is the Clerk, who is responsible for the overall management and welfare of volunteers.

Recruitment

Our organisation is committed to equal opportunities and seeks to recruit volunteers from a diverse range of backgrounds that reflects the makeup of the local community (see Equal Opportunities Policy). Volunteering opportunities will be widely promoted in ways that makes them accessible to all members of the community. Each potential volunteer may be asked to complete a short application form and be invited for an informal interview meeting, dependent on the volunteer role. Each person who volunteers may be asked for two references that identify their suitability and done in a way that recognises equal opportunity and confidentiality, working within the council's data protection rules.

Wherever possible we will try and match the need of our organisation and the volunteer. At times this may mean not being able to take on the volunteer but this will only be done on the basis of their suitability to the task(s).

Each person who volunteers and who will be involved with regulated activities will need to produce or undergo a DBS check. This check will be carried out before a volunteer begins work. However, if a volunteer has a criminal record this does not necessarily stop them from volunteering for our organisation.

Volunteers will have a clear and concise volunteer role and responsibilities description, including safety advice, which will be reviewed as appropriate. The role description will outline the volunteering tasks and will be discussed with the volunteer and the designated person referred to above, and will vary according to the task(s) being volunteered for; for example for a litter pick, the role and responsibilities will be explained to all volunteers at the beginning of each session. New regular volunteers will be supported in their role through a comprehensive induction process, as appropriate. Volunteers will be briefed about the different tasks to be undertaken and will be given the necessary information and equipment to enable them to carry them out efficiently. A risk assessment will be carried out for each volunteering activity. This will provide the basis for decisions about what information a volunteer needs and the appropriate induction/recruitment process.

Induction and Training

For the council's Youth Service, each volunteer will receive information, written and verbal about our organisation: the work we do, our structure and key policies and procedures such as health and safety, equal opportunities, safeguarding, confidentiality and data protection. Each volunteer will receive information about the volunteer's role and the named manager/supervisor. The named manager/supervisor will discuss with the volunteer any other training needs in supervision/1:1 support. Each volunteer will act as a volunteer on a trial basis of three months to ensure that we and each volunteer is happy with the role. We will encourage volunteers to develop and build on existing skills and knowledge through sharing good practice and learning and training opportunities. The designated person mentioned above will be responsible for ensuring that where possible relevant training is provided. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to attend the identified relevant training. Training in the management of volunteers will be provided as appropriate for those staff with direct responsibility for volunteers.

Support and Supervision

The Clerk will be the main point of contact for volunteers to seek guidance and support and to address any concerns.

Volunteers for the Youth Service will have supervision on a one to one basis with the service management. This will enable the volunteer and supervisor to identify, monitor and evaluate the volunteer's involvement, recognise achievements and identify any individual training needs. The frequency, duration and format of these sessions will be negotiated between the volunteer and the designated person mentioned above. Volunteers will be given the opportunity, where relevant, to share their views and opinions with our organisation's wider staff by being invited to staff/team meetings.

Formal recognition of the contribution of our volunteers will be made in various formats including newsletters, annual reports, articles in newspapers and a 'thank you letter'.

Expenses

Coxhoe Parish Council recognises that the reimbursement of expenses in traveling to and from the place of volunteering or in the course of volunteering is important from an equal opportunities point of view. Our volunteers are able to claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure. What can be reclaimed from our organisation and the calculation of expenses will be explained to the volunteer before they start any activity likely to give rise to expenses. We have a consistent approach to the reimbursement of expenses which is the same for volunteers and paid staff. It is the responsibility of the designated person mentioned above to make volunteers aware of the procedure for the reimbursement of expenses.

Insurance

Our liability insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability towards them, as long as adequate risk assessment is in place and the names of the volunteers are recorded. We do not insure the volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage. It is the responsibility of the volunteers to inform their motor insurance company that they are using their car in the act of volunteering.

The Parish Council's current insurance policy provides personal accident cover as a benefit whilst volunteers are acting under the instruction of and in activity known to the Parish Council. This is intended as a benefit paid when someone is injured during the course of their volunteering activities and then cannot work as a result. The cover is provided for people aged 16 and over and people below the age of 90. This cover is in addition to the Public Liability cover and the Employers' Liability cover provided under the Council's policy.

Problem-solving

Coxhoe Parish Council aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively, and consistently. Service users and other agencies are able to complain about paid staff, volunteers or the service.

The Clerk is responsible for handling volunteer complaints or conduct and any complaints should be referred to them. In the event of a complaint all relevant facts should be obtained as quickly as possible and attempts will be made to try to solve any problems informally at the earliest possible stage. If this is not possible then our formal complaints policy and other procedures will be referred to. We will support the volunteer during the complaints process. If volunteers wish to make a complaint about their treatment by us they should speak to their designated supervisor. If it is about their supervisor they should speak to the manager of their supervisor (for the Clerk this is the Chair or Vice Chair of the Council). See complaints procedure for more information on the process.

Rights and Responsibilities

Coxhoe Parish Council recognises the rights of volunteers to:

- Know what is and is not expected of them
- Have adequate support in their volunteering role
- Know what to do if anything goes wrong
- Be free from discrimination
- Have safe conditions for carrying out their volunteering activities
- Be insured
- Receive relevant out of pocket expenses
- Receive an induction programme and training opportunities where possible.

We expect volunteers to:

- Be reliable and honest
- Respect confidentiality
- Comply with our policies and procedures
- Make the most of training and support opportunities
- Carry out their volunteering tasks as agreed and in a way that reflects our values and aims
- Respect the work of our organisation and not bring it into disrepute.