

Volunteer Policy

Introduction and scope

Downswood Parish Council (DPC) recognises the vital role and contribution of volunteers. This policy aims to ensure that all volunteers can work with us in a safe and supported environment.

Many of the Parish Council's activities involve working in partnership with community groups and volunteers who also work directly with the Council for a number of reasons:

- To encourage involvement and increase engagement with the communities served by DPC
- To help ensure the services reflect the needs of our community
- To increase skills, experience, perspectives and diversity in decision-making and the workplace
- To enable us to increase skills and capacity to respond to emerging priorities.

Volunteering with the Parish Council will be guided by the following principles:

- Tasks to be performed will be clearly defined so everyone is sure of their role and responsibilities
- The Parish Council will comply with the Data Protection Act (2018) and UK GDPR when processing volunteers' data
- Volunteering opportunities will complement rather than replace the work of paid staff
- Parish Council staff and Councillors will work positively with any volunteers and where appropriate, will actively seek to involve them in their work
- Volunteers will be provided with regular opportunities to share ideas/ concerns with a named contact
- Volunteers will be provided with all the information they need to enable them to fully participate in the activity.
- Volunteering activities will be developed in a way that helps the Parish Council to achieve the wider aims and ambitions of the Parish Council e.g. Biodiversity and will be guided by policies in those areas where they exist.

Existing and future policies will be checked to ensure their impact on volunteering is considered.

Policy aims

This policy sets out the principles for voluntary involvement in activities authorised by Downswood Parish Council, who acknowledge that volunteers contribute in many ways and that volunteering can benefit the council, local communities and the volunteers themselves.

This policy confirms the Parish Council's commitment to involving volunteers in its work.

This policy provides an overview of the scope of volunteering opportunities that can be provided by the Parish Council.

This policy, alongside other related policies, procedures and guidance provides a framework for the Parish Council's volunteering opportunities.

Volunteer Work

Volunteering opportunities must be formally developed and approved by a relevant Committee or subcommittee before recruitment is commenced. If you wish to become a volunteer, you will need to complete a copy of Appendix 1 below and submit this to the Parish Clerk

Such work needs to be set out in a clear and understandable format.

The final decision about the type of work and its execution lies with the Downswood Parish Council.

All volunteer positions will be provided by the Parish Council on its website and social media, outlining the scope of the volunteering opportunity, time commitments, specific tasks & duties, skills levels, previous experience and any other requirements.

All potential volunteers will be required to read this policy as well as our Health and Safety Policy and confirm this by completing Appendix 2 below and returning this to the Parish Clerk before any volunteer work starts.

Where there is a requirement for a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check, this will be highlighted as part of the recruitment process.

Training & Risk Assessment

Volunteers must be adequately trained, skilled and equipped to enable them to carry out the role/ tasks required. The exact nature of the training, skills and equipment will depend on the role and the findings from the Risk Assessment.

A Risk Assessment will be undertaken to identify any risks that might be faced and how they will be managed. The Parish Clerk will provide a template Risk Assessment to the lead organiser of the volunteering activity and a completed copy must be returned and approved by the Parish Clerk before any volunteering activity may be undertaken. A visual inspection of the work area must also be carried out and relevant information/ photos recorded in or attached to the Risk Assessment prior to work commencing.

The risk assessment should include as a minimum:

- A full description of the volunteering activity
- The date/s, time/s and specific location/s (including postcode) where the activity is taking place
- An assessment of the site detailing any risks and how they will be managed
- How First Aid will be accessed
- The minimum competency/ capability required from volunteers

- The circumstances of the work e.g. the degree of supervision required
- Details of any tools and/or equipment being used
- Training/ skills requirements.

The training standard must be sufficient to ensure the Health and Safety of volunteers and any people who might be affected by the work.

All volunteers must be over 16 years of age unless being supervised by an adult parent/ carer who is also a registered Parish Council volunteer.

Where appropriate, volunteers will be provided with any necessary PPE, tools and training to enable them to carry out agreed tasks. If volunteers provide their own tools, they do so at their own risk. Downswood Parish Council cannot be held liable for any injury caused by inappropriate use of any equipment/tools, or through the use of faulty equipment/tools provided by volunteers.

Where appropriate, volunteers will receive an induction into Downswood Parish Council and their own area of work. Training will be provided where appropriate.

Volunteers must be informed about the task and its purpose, health, safety and supervision arrangements.

Health & Safety

All works undertaken by volunteers shall have regard to the Health & Safety at Work Act. Volunteers will not be authorised to carry out work that the Council considers hazardous or would contravene the principles of the Health and Safety at Work Act, considering the competence of the volunteer(s) carrying out the proposed work.

Volunteering activity is covered by Downswood Parish Council's Health and Safety Policy.

All volunteers are covered by Downswood Parish Council's insurance policy whilst they are engaged in any Parish Council volunteering work. Only registered volunteers carrying out volunteer work that has been authorised by the Parish Clerk will be covered by the Parish Council's insurance, however the council does not insure volunteer's personal possessions.

Equal Opportunities

Downswood Parish Council operates an Equalities Policy in respect of both paid staff and volunteers. Volunteers will be provided with a copy of this policy and will be expected to demonstrate their commitment to it as a Parish Council volunteer.

Confidentiality

Volunteers will be bound by the same requirements for confidentiality as Downswood Parish Council

Problem Solving

DPC aims to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage. DPC has a policy and procedure for dealing with complaints which extends to complaints by or about volunteers.

Expenses

Expenses for essential items and travel carried out on behalf of the Parish Council will be met providing this is agreed in advance with the Parish Clerk. Volunteers must not purchase any items or incur travel that they intend to claim expenses for without prior approval of the Parish Clerk.

Council Business

All volunteers must have due regard to the fact that they are carrying out authorised work on behalf of Downswood Parish Council and as such are representing the Council, both in quality of work and possible interaction with the public.

Civility & Respect

Downswood Parish Council operate a civility & respect policy and it is expected that volunteers will comply with this policy which can be found on the Downwood Parish Council web site – www.downswoodpc.org

Responsibility

This policy will be approved and reviewed by the Parish Council on an annual basis. Implementation and adherence to this policy is the responsibility of all staff, Councillors and volunteers within the Parish Council.

Appendix 1

Volunteer Application Form

Personal Details

Name	
Address	
Date of Birth	
Contact Telephone Number	
Email Address	

Skills & Interests

Reason for Volunteering	
Existing Skills, Qualifications or Interests	
What Skill and Experience are you looking to develop?	

Appendix 2

VOLUNTEER AGREEMENT FORM

I _____ [Print name]

Volunteering for Downswood Parish Council, acknowledge that I have read, accept and will adhere to the Volunteer Policy.

Signed _____ Dated: _____