

# *Quorn Parish Council*



## **Volunteer Handbook**

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## APPENDIX

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## **Purpose**

This handbook has been put together by Quorn Parish Council (QPC) as a guide for the Council's volunteers, both new and experienced.

It aims to set out what you may expect from your experience as a volunteer, and includes the policies put in place by the Council to ensure positive outcomes for all.

Much of the handbook is generic to all the Council's volunteers. Aspects relevant to specific areas of volunteer activity are included in the Appendix.

It is intended to answer some of the questions you may have. If you have other questions not covered here, please contact to your Volunteer Co-ordinator using the details below.

## **Key Contacts**

### **Volunteer Coordinator:**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone numbers \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

### **Parish Office:**

Telephone 01509 414491

Email [parishclerk@quorndon.com](mailto:parishclerk@quorndon.com)

## Introduction

Local Government in Quorn has three tiers: Leicestershire County Council, Charnwood Borough Council and Quorn Parish Council. The role of the Parish Council is to:

- maintain, repair and improve parish facilities including recreational areas, public spaces and buildings
- liaise with local Police and Neighbourhood Watch on crime, security and traffic issues
- scrutinise local planning applications
- liaise with County and Borough Councils on the maintenance, repair and improvement of highways drainage, footpaths, cycleways, public transport, street cleaning, conservation matters (including trees and listed buildings), and environmental issues such as quarrying and waste recycling
- plan, consult on, and implement village infrastructure projects (such as The Cross, The Banks, Caves Field, and Stafford Orchard)
- support local arts, sports, youth groups and societies, including providing grants where appropriate
- investigate and resolve local problems and complaints received from the community

The Parish Council has 11 locally elected Councillors, who are themselves unpaid volunteers looking after the interests of the community they represent, supported by a Clerk and Administrative Assistant employed in the Parish Office. The full council meets monthly to consider, discuss and resolve parish matters, aided by a number of subcommittees on which smaller groups of councillors attend to specific issues.

Of necessity, some parish council services have to be provided by paid contractors, for example, grass cutting, tree surgery, administration, building repairs. However, in order to keep our community vibrant and make our village a great place to live, the Council seeks to provide everyone with opportunities to be stakeholders in their village and make a positive contribution to it by volunteering for a broad range of activities. The Council's Human Resources Subcommittee is responsible for recruiting and looking after its volunteers.

## Quorn Parish Council's Offer to Volunteers

The Council values the contribution made by all its volunteers:

- QPC is committed to diversity in all areas of its activities, having much to learn and profit from diverse cultures. We encourage and value ideas and participation from all ages, genders, backgrounds and abilities to represent the community we serve.
- We want volunteers to feel they are an integral part of a wider parish council team, that they are treated fairly and equally, and that they are valued for their individual skills and the contribution they make to village life, so that volunteering is a positive experience.
- Volunteers will not be asked to undertake any activities carried out by the Council's paid employees.
- There will be no employment or other contract between the Council and its volunteers.
- QPC aims to resolve any complaints raised by a volunteer in a timely manner

## Why Volunteer?

There are many reasons for becoming a volunteer, for example:

- To build on your existing skills and learn new ones
- To make new friends
- To increase become more involved in, and knowledgeable about, your local community
- To increase your own self-confidence and interpersonal skills
- To be appreciated by others in your community who benefit from your volunteering

## Volunteer Opportunities

There is a diverse array of activities available to Parish Council volunteers:

- Serving on joint council bodies eg park and library management committees, project development teams
- Staffing the community managed library
- Work parties in wildlife, park, river, lake and sensitive environmental areas
- Tree, Footpath, Heritage and Park Wardens
- Organising and stewarding village events eg May Day, Open Gardens, Christmas festivities
- Conducting research, user surveys and Public Consultations
- Working in partnership with other voluntary bodies eg Wildlife Trust
- Helping out in Parish Office

## Recruitment

Quorn Parish Council seeks to recruit volunteers from a wide range of ages and backgrounds to reflect the makeup of our community, and where practical will adapt roles to suit special needs.

Opportunities are advertised on village notice boards, on the village website [www.quorndon.com/parishcouncil](http://www.quorndon.com/parishcouncil), in *The Quorndon* village magazine, and by word of mouth.

Potential volunteers are invited to contact the Parish Clerk, verbally or in writing, and will be asked to complete an application form. A copy of the Council's Volunteer Policy will be provided, and an informal discussion with a councillor(s) arranged to explore further the volunteer's skills and interests. The suitability of the volunteer for a particular role will be recommended to Council for consideration. Thereafter the Clerk will write to the volunteer confirming the role to be undertaken, or an explanation of why the Council cannot agree to the appointment.

If training is required, suitable courses will be organised, in some cases leading to certificates of competence.

For certain roles references may be required, likewise a DBS (disclosure and barring service, formerly CRB) check. This is to ensure the safety of all and is an insurance necessity. If a role does require a DBS check, volunteer work may only start on receipt of a satisfactory report, and for an initial trial period of 4-6 weeks.

## **Volunteer Induction**

A new volunteer will receive an induction relevant to the activity. This will include a role description, information about the aims of the particular project, appropriate training and introduction to key contacts on site. A copy of the Council's Policies and Procedures relating to volunteers will be provided, and the volunteer will be expected to have an understanding of these and their implications.

## **Support and Supervision**

Parish Council volunteers can expect regular support and supervision by the volunteer coordinator, or named contact. There will be opportunities to discuss the development of the role, and seek any advice or guidance needed.

In addition, volunteers may contact the Parish Clerk, or any Councillors, for advice, support and assistance.

There should be no financial barriers to volunteering. Any out-of-pocket expenses reasonably incurred by your role may be claimed on production of receipts, tickets or invoices as agreed with your named contact. A completed claim form signed by your volunteer coordinator is submitted to the Parish Clerk for settlement.

Volunteers are covered by the Parish Council's Public Liability and Professional Indemnity Insurances. However, volunteers need to inform their motor insurance company if they intend to use their car for volunteer work.

## **What does the Parish Council expect from its volunteers?**

A volunteer can expect to decide how much time to offer and for how long.

In return the Parish Council expects a volunteer to

- Maintain an agreed level of commitment, keep good time, and be reliable
- Follow the role description provided at induction
- Maintain confidentiality, as prescribed in the role description
- Be patient and objective without making judgements about people's problems or situation
- Ensure that all volunteers and members of the public are treated with good manners and respect at all times
- Abide by the Policies and Procedures forming part of this handbook
- Be honest if problems arise with other volunteers, or the role, by speaking with the key contact
- Attend support and supervision meetings regularly
- Maintain and uphold the good name of Quorn Parish Council

## **Resolving Problems**

It is recognised that occasionally volunteers may have cause to raise a grievance to do with their work. It is always better to seek to resolve a problem than to let it fester. The situation should be discussed with the Volunteer Coordinator, or, if the grievance is with them, speak to the Chair of the management committee or the Parish Clerk.

If that does not resolve the problem, it may be raised via the Parish Clerk in confidence at the next Council meeting. Council may then refer the matter to the Human Resources Subcommittee to seek a resolution and report back.

The same procedure applies should the Council seek to resolve a problem relating to a volunteer.

### **Availability to volunteer**

Whilst volunteers determine how much time they have available for their volunteer work, it is accepted that circumstances change. The Council therefore asks its volunteers to:

- give as much notice as possible of unavailability due to holidays, etc so that alternative arrangements can be made if need be by speaking to the Volunteer Coordinator;
- inform the Volunteer Coordinator if a volunteer wishes to take a break from volunteering, which will always be respected;
- provide feedback by interview or exit questionnaire when a volunteer chooses to move on from a particular role;
- give advance notice to the Volunteer Coordinator if a reference is required following a minimum three-month period of volunteer work. Any reference is based solely on the role undertaken as a volunteer.

### **Key Volunteer Policies and Procedures**

Quorn Parish Council has in place a number of policies and procedures which relate to the activities undertaken by members of the community on a voluntary basis on behalf of the Council.

The key policies and procedures outlined below apply to all Council volunteers, as well as to its employees, contractors and Councillors. They are important in ensuring the Council complies with legislation, meets the conditions of its insurance cover, and serve to protect those involved in delivering Council services as well as members of the wider community.

All Council volunteers are therefore required to familiarise themselves with the Council's policies and procedures, to be mindful about adhering to them as they volunteer, and to raise concerns about failure to comply in a given situation.

Some areas of volunteer activity also have a set of policies and procedures relating to that specific activity. These are included as appendices to the volunteer handbook issued to those volunteering in that area.

- Equality and Diversity
- Data Protection
- Volunteer Complaints and Disputes Policy and Procedure



## **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY POLICY**

### **Introduction**

Quorn Parish Council (QPC) works to ensure that all staff both paid and unpaid and users of all services receive equal access and treatment. QPC recognises the discrimination experienced by certain individuals and groups in society and as such actively works to eliminate all forms of discrimination by the removal of unfair mechanisms, prejudice and oppressive behaviour.

### **Policy Statement**

The Council acknowledges both its legal and moral duty to ensure genuine equality of opportunity and makes a commitment not to unfairly discriminate against any individual working for the organisation, through its management practices and in the services it provides.

It is the Council's policy that all employees are recruited, trained and promoted on the basis of ability and requirements of the job.

There shall be no discrimination and it will strive to protect people from unfair treatment under the Equality Act 2010 which covers 9 protected characteristics. Everyone has a protected characteristic.

Every effort will be made to promote an awareness of this policy within the organisation.

The following structures have been identified through which the organisation will work to combat all forms of discrimination.

### **Committees**

The Committees of QPC will work in a participatory way and will actively encourage and support the involvement of all people in the running of the organisation. This will include the planning and delivery of services on all levels.

### **Employment Policies and Practices**

QPC will seek to ensure that its recruitment policies and practices for both paid and unpaid work do not discriminate unfairly on any grounds.

### **Training and Information**

QPC will provide training (where applicable) for its members, volunteers and staff both unpaid and paid in the promotion and practice of equal opportunities.

### **Service Provision and Development**

QPC will ensure that everyone who uses its services will be treated equally. Services users will be treated as individuals with courtesy, respect and each person's needs will be recognised.

Service users will be encouraged to offer comments that will help improve and develop services.

QPC will work with other organisations to develop services and facilities that are relevant.

### **Monitoring and Compliance**

QPC is committed to monitoring this policy which will be reviewed annually. QPC has a strong commitment to ensuring compliance with this policy. All committee, employees, volunteers and members are expected to be actively engaged promoting the objectives of the policy. QPC will train its staff in the promotion and practice of equal opportunities. Behaviour or actions that contravene either the intent or the letter of this policy will be taken seriously and, where appropriate, will be dealt with under relevant disciplinary procedures.

At all times QPC will strive to operate through a process based upon the development of an equal partnership between all those involved, working with and alongside people rather than for and on behalf of people, to enable the sharing of skills, knowledge and experience.



## **Data Protection Policy and Procedures**

### **Introduction**

Quorn Parish Council is committed to a policy of protecting the rights and privacy of individuals. It needs to collect and use certain types of Data in order to carry on its work. This personal information must be collected and dealt with appropriately.

The Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) governs the use of information about people (personal data). Personal data can be held on computer or in a manual file, and includes email, minutes of a meetings, and photographs. The Council will remain the Data Controller for the information held. The Council, its staff and volunteers will be personally responsible for processing and using personal information in accordance with the Data Protection Act.

Councillors, Council employees and volunteers who have access to personal information, will be expected to have read and comply with this policy.

### **Purpose**

The purpose of this policy is to set out Quorn Parish Council's commitment and procedures for protecting personal data. The Council regards the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as very important to successful working, and to maintaining the confidence of those with whom we deal.

### **The Data Protection Act Legislation**

This contains 8 principles for processing personal data with which Quorn Parish Council will comply.

Personal data shall:

1. be processed fairly and lawfully and, in particular, shall not be processed unless specific conditions are met;
2. be obtained only for one or more of the purposes specified in the Act, and shall not be processed in any manner incompatible with that purpose or those purposes;
3. be adequate, relevant and not excessive in relation to those purpose(s);
4. be accurate and, where necessary, kept up to date,
5. not be kept for longer than is necessary;
6. be processed in accordance with the rights of data subjects under the Act;
7. be kept secure by the Data Controller who takes appropriate technical and other measures to prevent unauthorised or unlawful processing or accidental loss or destruction of, or damage to, personal information;
8. not be transferred to a country or territory outside the European Economic Area unless that country or territory ensures an adequate level of protection for the rights and freedoms of data subjects in relation to the processing of personal information.

The following list of definitions of the technical terms is intended to aid understanding of this policy.

**Data Controller** – The person who (either alone or with others) decides what personal information the Council will hold and how it will be held or used.

**Data Protection Act 1998** – The UK legislation that provides a framework for responsible behaviour by those using personal information.

**Data Protection Officer** – The person(s) on the Council who is responsible for ensuring that it follows its Data Protection Policy and complies with the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Data Subject/Service User** – The individual whose personal information is being held or processed by the Council (for example: a volunteer or service user).

**'Explicit' consent** – is a freely given, specific and informed agreement by a Data Subject (see definition) to the processing\* of personal information\* about her/him. Explicit consent is needed for processing sensitive\* data including the following:

- a) racial or ethnic origin of the data subject;
- b) political opinions;
- c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature;
- d) trade union membership;
- e) physical or mental health or condition;
- f) sexual life;
- g) criminal record;
- h) proceedings for any offence committed or alleged to have been committed.

**Notification** – Notifying the Information Commissioners Office (IOC) about the data processing activities of the Council but, as a not-for-profit organisation, the Council is exempt from notification.

**Information Commissioner** – The UK Information Commissioner responsible for implementing and overseeing the Data Protection Act 1998.

**Processing** – means collecting, amending, handling, storing or disclosing personal information.

**Personal Information** – Information about living individuals that enables them to be identified – e.g. names, address, telephone numbers and email addresses. It does not apply to information about organisations, companies and agencies but applies to named persons, such as individual volunteers.

### **Applying the Data Protection Act to the activities of Quorn Parish Council**

Whilst access to personal information is limited to Council staff and in certain circumstances volunteers, occasions may arise which involve the collection of personal details from members of the public, for example in conducting a public consultation, or enrolling the public in library activities. In such circumstances those concerned will be told why their data is being collected. It is the Council's responsibility to ensure the data is only used for that purpose.

Individuals have a right to have data corrected if it is wrong, to prevent use which is causing them damage or distress or to stop marketing information being sent to them.

## **Responsibilities**

The Council is the Data Controller under the Act, and is legally responsible for complying with the Act, which means that it determines the purposes for which personal information held may be used.

The Council and its sub-committees will take into account legal requirements and ensure that the Act is properly implemented. It will, through appropriate management, enforce strict application of criteria and controls that:

- observe fully conditions regarding the fair collection and use of information;
- meet its legal obligations to specify the purposes for which information is used;
- collect and process appropriate information, and only to the extent that it is needed to fulfil its operational needs or to comply with any legal requirements;
- ensure the quality of information used;
- ensure that the rights of people about whom information is held, can be fully exercised under the Act, including:
  - the right to be informed that processing is being undertaken;
  - the right of access to one's personal information;
  - the right to prevent processing in certain circumstances and;
  - the right to correct, rectify, block or erase information which is regarded as wrong information);
- take appropriate technical and organisational security measures to safeguard personal information;
- ensure that personal information is not transferred abroad without suitable safeguards;
- treat people justly and fairly whatever their age, religion, disability, gender, sexual orientation or ethnicity when dealing with requests for information;
- set out clear procedures for responding to requests for information

The Data Protection Officer for Quorn Parish Council is:

Name: **Parish Clerk**

Contact Details: 01509 414491; [parishclerk@quorndon.com](mailto:parishclerk@quorndon.com)

The Data Protection Officer will be responsible for ensuring that the policy is implemented and will have overall responsibility for:

- everyone processing personal information understands that they are contractually responsible for following good data protection practice;
- everyone processing personal information is appropriately trained to do so;
- everyone processing personal information is appropriately supervised;
- anybody wanting to make enquiries about handling personal information knows what to do;
- dealing promptly and courteously with any enquiries about handling personal information;
- describing clearly how it handles personal information;
- regularly reviewing and auditing the ways it hold, manage and use personal information;
- regularly assessing and evaluating its methods and performance in relation to handling personal information
- making volunteers aware that a breach of the rules and procedures identified in this policy may lead to action being taken against them.

This policy will be updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management, security and control and to ensure compliance with any changes or amendments made to the Data Protection Act 1998.

In case of any queries or questions in relation to this policy please contact the Parish Clerk as Data Protection Officer:

### **Data collection**

#### ***Informed consent***

Informed consent is when:

- a Data Subject clearly understands why their information is needed, who it will be shared with, the possible consequences of them agreeing or refusing the proposed use of the data
- and *then gives their consent*.

The Council will ensure that data is collected within the boundaries defined in this policy. This applies to data that is collected in person, or by completing a form.

When collecting data, the Council will ensure that the Data Subject:

- clearly understands why the information is needed;
- understands what it will be used for and what the consequences are should the Data Subject decide not to give consent to processing;
- as far as reasonably possible, grants explicit consent, either written or verbal for data to be processed;
- is, as far as reasonably practicable, competent enough to give consent and has given so freely without any duress;
- has received sufficient information on why their data is needed and how it will be used.

## **Data Storage**

Information and records relating to service users will be stored securely and will only be accessible to authorised individuals.

Information will be stored for only as long as it is needed or required statute and will be disposed of appropriately.

It is the Council's responsibility to ensure all personal and company data is non-recoverable from any computer system previously used within the organisation, which has been passed on/sold to a third party.

This policy will be updated as necessary to reflect best practice in data management, security and control and to ensure compliance with any changes or amendments made to the Data Protection Act 1998.

## **Subject Access Requests.**

Members of the public may request certain information from Quorn Parish Council as set out in its **Freedom of Information Act 2000 Publication Scheme**. Information held as part of the Library Grant Agreement with Leicestershire County Council is not covered by the Act, but it may be necessary to assist the Local Authority if required to assist them to meet the Freedom of Information Act request where information is held on its behalf.

## **Disclosure**

The Council may need to share data with other agencies such as the Local Authority, funding bodies and other voluntary agencies.

The Data Subject will be made aware in most circumstances how and with whom their information will be shared. In the following circumstances the law allows the Council to disclose data (including sensitive data) without the Data Subject's consent:

- carrying out a legal duty or as authorised by the Secretary of State;
- protecting vital interests of a Data Subject or other person;
- the Data Subject has already made the information public;
- conducting any legal proceedings, obtaining legal advice or defending any legal rights;
- monitoring for equal opportunities purposes – i.e. race, disability or religion;

- providing a confidential service where the Data Subject's consent cannot be obtained or where it is reasonable to proceed without consent: e.g. where we would wish to avoid forcing stressed or ill Data Subjects to provide consent signatures;

The Council regards the lawful and correct treatment of personal information as very important to successful working, and to maintaining the confidence of those with whom we deal.

The Council intends to ensure that personal information is treated lawfully and correctly.

### **Risk Management**

The consequences of breaching Data Protection can cause harm or distress to individuals if their information is released to inappropriate people, or they could be denied a service to which they are entitled. Volunteers should be aware that they can be personally liable if they share personal data inappropriately. This policy is designed to minimise the risks and to ensure that the reputation of the Council is not damaged through inappropriate or unauthorised access and sharing.

### **Destroying personal data.**

Personal data should only be kept for as long as it is needed. For example, if a volunteer ceases their voluntary work for the Council.

The list is to be reviewed annually, updated, and all information confidentially destroyed at the end of the relevant retention period.

### **Further information**

If members of the public have specific questions about information security and data protection in relation to the Council, they should contact the Data Protection Officer:

The Information Commissioner's website ([www.ico.gov.uk](http://www.ico.gov.uk)) is another source of useful information.



**Quorn Parish Council**  
**SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR**  
**VOLUNTEERS**

## SOCIAL MEDIA POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERS

**Quorn Parish Council (QPC)** recognises that volunteers who are involved in its work may use social media either as part of their role or in their private lives. A written policy is therefore required for all volunteers on the acceptable use of social networking at work.

**Quorn Parish Council** encourages the responsible use of social media. The purpose of this policy is to set out what **QPC** expects from our volunteers when using social media. It is important to remember that we are all ambassadors for the council and that social media is never private.

This policy is solely for volunteers and aims to:

- give clear guidelines on what volunteers can say about the organisation;
- comply with relevant legislation and protect volunteers;
- help volunteer supervisors manage performance effectively;
- help volunteers draw a line between their private lives and their volunteering;
- protect **QPC** against liability for the actions of volunteers;
- be clear about sensitive issues such as monitoring and explain how problems with inappropriate use will be addressed.

### 1. Policy statement

1.1. **Quorn Parish Council** recognises that the internet provides unique opportunities to participate in interactive discussions and share information on particular topics relevant to our work using a wide variety of social media, such as Facebook, Twitter, blogs and wikis etc. **This policy aims to protect individuals volunteering with us in any role and to encourage you to take responsibility for what you write, exercise good judgment and common sense. (See 2.1)**

1.2. Inappropriate use of social media can pose risks to our confidential and proprietary information and reputation, and can jeopardise our compliance with legal obligations. To minimise these risks, to avoid loss of work time and to ensure that our IT resources and communications systems are used only for appropriate business purposes, we expect volunteers to adhere to this policy.

### 2. Who is covered by the Policy?

2.1. This policy covers volunteers involved in the activities of **QPC**.

### 3. Scope and purpose of the Policy

3.1. This policy deals with the use of all forms of social media, including Facebook, YouTube, Twitter and **all** other social networking sites, and **all** other internet postings, including blogs.

3.2. It applies to the use of social media both for volunteering and personal purposes, whether while volunteering or otherwise. The policy applies regardless of whether the social media is accessed using our IT facilities and equipment or equipment belonging to volunteers.

3.3. If a volunteer is found to be in breach of this policy their volunteer supervisor will address this using the Volunteer Complaints and Disputes Policy and Procedure.

3.4. Volunteers may be required to remove internet postings which are deemed to constitute a breach of this policy.

3.5. This policy links to all other policies therefore social media should never be used in a way that breaches any of our other policies such as equal opportunities, data protection etc.

#### 4. Personnel responsible for implementing the Policy

- 4.1. All volunteer coordinators have a specific responsibility for operating within the boundaries of this policy, ensuring that all volunteers understand the standards of behaviour expected of them and taking action when behaviour falls below this.
- 4.2. All volunteers are responsible for the success of this policy and should ensure that they take the time to read and understand it. Any misuse of social media or questions regarding the content or application of this policy should be reported to the Parish Clerk.
- 4.3. Any content which raises a safeguarding concern must be reported to the Safeguarding Officer in line with the reporting procedures outlined in **QPC** Safeguarding Policy.

#### 5. Guidelines for responsible use of social media

*The following sections of the policy provide volunteers with common-sense guidelines and recommendations for using social media responsibly and safely.*

- 5.1. We want you to help protect our business reputation. Volunteers must not post disparaging or defamatory statements about:
  - a) the Council;
  - b) **QPC** staff, volunteers or members past or present;
  - c) contractors and
  - d) other affiliates and stakeholders.

Volunteers should also avoid social communications that might be misconstrued in a way that could damage our business reputation, even indirectly.

- 5.2. Volunteers are personally responsible for what they communicate in social media (as part of their role or on personal sites). Remember that what you publish might be available to be read by the masses (including **QPC**), colleagues, volunteers, future employers and social acquaintances for a long time. Keep this in mind before you post content.
- 5.3. A publicity consent form must be obtained prior to posting images or text which may be used on social media.
- 5.4. QPC does not permit tagging of vulnerable adults or anyone under the age of 18.
- 5.5. There is no obligation for volunteers to link their personal social media to any QPC social media.
- 5.6. Volunteers are not permitted to set up social media accounts for work purposes without prior consultation with their volunteer coordinator and the Parish Clerk.
- 5.7. If you disclose your affiliation as a volunteer of QPC, you must also state that your views do not represent those of the organisation you are volunteering with. For example, you could state, “the views in this posting do not represent the views of **QPC**.” You should also ensure that your profile and any content you post are consistent with the image you present to those you work with as part of your volunteering role.

- 5.8. You can only use QPC email address if your volunteering role involves using social media on behalf of the organisation.
- 5.9. You are responsible for the security settings of any social media sites you use and should ensure they are set to the appropriate level if you wish to limit who can see your information.
- 5.10. Remember that you must respect confidentiality at all times and protect confidential information. You should be mindful of Data Protection issues, if in doubt speak to the Parish Clerk. Confidential information includes things such as unpublished details about our work, details of current projects, future projects, financial information or information held on our supporters, staff or volunteers.
- 5.11. Avoid posting comments about sensitive QPC related topics, such as our performance. Even if you make it clear that your views do not represent those of our council, your comments could still damage our reputation.
- 5.12. If you are uncertain or concerned about the appropriateness of any statement or posting, refrain from making the communication until you discuss it with your volunteer coordinator.
- 5.13. If you see content in social media that disparages or reflects poorly on QPC or our stakeholders, you should report it to your volunteer coordinator and/or the Parish Clerk. All volunteers are responsible for protecting our reputation.
- 5.14. The contact details of business contacts made during the course of your volunteering are regarded as our confidential information, and as such you will be required to delete all such details from your personal social networking accounts, should you finish volunteering with QPC.
- 5.15. Contact details of volunteers are subject to data protection. Staff are not permitted to access or store information on volunteers that would breach data protection.

## 6. Personal use of social media in the library

We recognise that volunteers may occasionally desire to use social media for personal activities in the library by means of our computers, networks and other IT resources and communications systems. We discourage such occasional use, and urge volunteers to refrain from so doing during shifts. You should not use **QPC** IT resources and communications systems for any matter that you wish to be kept private or confidential.

If using social media while volunteering, circulating chain letters or other spam is never permitted. Circulating or posting commercial, personal, religious or political solicitations, or promotion of outside organisations unrelated to QPC work is also prohibited.

### Disclaimer

Reasonable precautions have been taken to ensure information in this publication is accurate. However it is not intended to be legally comprehensive; it is designed to provide guidance in good faith, without accepting liability. If relevant, we therefore recommend you take appropriate professional advice before taking any action on the matters covered herein.



## **Volunteer Complaints and Disputes Policy and Procedure**

### **Introduction**

The general aim that volunteering is a positive experience for everyone involved is frequently met. There are occasions however when problems may arise. This policy covers what to do when a volunteer raises a concern or complaint and how to handle any concerns or complaints that the Council may have about a volunteer.

### **Dealing with complaints and disputes**

All complaints and disputes will be resolved openly, fairly and quickly to:

- Protect our volunteers
- Minimise any risk of disruption to the members of the public, and other volunteers
- Demonstrate that Council respects its volunteers
- Protect the reputation of the Council

### **Complaints from volunteers**

Volunteers have the right to complain if they feel that they have been unfairly treated. Whilst they have no legal rights as they are not employees the procedure will follow the 3 stages below:

#### **Oral complaint**

This is the initial discussion and may be informal in nature. Many complaints can be resolved at this stage. The initial complaint should be raised with the Volunteer Co-ordinator who supervises the volunteer. If the complaint is about this person then it will be referred to the Chair of the Management Committee, or the Parish Clerk.

#### **Written complaint**

If the problem is not satisfactorily resolved, then it should be raised in writing. A response will be provided within 10 working days, if more time is needed then a holding letter will be sent with the reason for the delay and a date when the outcome should be received by.

#### **Right to appeal**

Volunteers who are not satisfied with the outcome of their written complaint will have the opportunity to address the Chair of the Council's Human Resources Committee to review the case. Ultimately the matter may come before full Council under Confidential Matters, after which the decision on the matter will be final.

## Procedure for dealing with Volunteer Complaints and Disputes

The types of complaints and disputes that may need to be address with volunteers could include:

- Persistent bad time keeping
- Going beyond the boundaries of the agreed role
- Not respecting service users and other volunteers confidentiality/dignity/independence and individuality
- Breach of health and safety regulations or agreements
- Misuse of the organisations equipment or facilities
- Theft
- Discrimination on grounds of disability/ethnicity/religion/gender/sexuality/age
- Abuse or other offensive behaviour
- Arriving for work under the influence of alcohol, drugs or other substance abuse

Many issues such as not fitting in as well as expected with the team or being unreliable should be picked up and dealt with during regular supervision. It may be possible to resolve these without resorting to formal procedures.

### Oral discussion

- Start by chatting with the volunteer about a whole range of issues that may be influencing their ability to carry out tasks, their behaviour or their attitude. Often they may not realise that they are doing anything wrong and can't be expected to change if a particular issue is not brought to their attention
- Supply volunteers with a well thought out induction pack, volunteer policy and role description. Remind them of the policies ground rules etc. of the organisation
- Check if they have training needs
- Do they need extra support or supervision?
- Are they unfulfilled in their current role? Have their needs changed, or would they like to use different skills to help the organisation? If so you could modify their role description, ask them if they would like to work in another area or develop a completely new role for them
- Is the volunteer suffering from burnout or unable to cope with the demands of the role anymore? They may need a break from volunteering or may prefer to volunteer in another organisation for a while
- Keep notes of any meetings where problems are discussed

### Written warning

If the issue is not resolved at the oral stage or review

- Give the volunteer a written warning outlining your reason for the complaint
- Allow them to state their case, which could be to the Volunteer Co-ordinator or a senior member of staff and to be accompanied by a person of their choice
- Depending on the nature of the complaint, further objectives could be set and help offered to the volunteer
- If you decide to dismiss the volunteer they should have the right to appeal
- The decision to dismiss should be a last resort

## **Right to appeal**

If a volunteer has been dismissed

- They should have the right to appeal in writing to the Chair of the Council
- Sometimes a sub-committee can be formed specifically to hear appeals
- The volunteer should be allowed to have a nominated person present at any appeal meeting
- The Chair or sub-committee must respond within a time specified in the organisation's problem solving procedure and their decision is final

## **Dismissing a volunteer**

By this stage the volunteer will have had opportunity to put their case forward. Further debate is unhelpful. An unequivocal message has to be imparted to the volunteer. For this reason it may be better if it comes from someone with a degree of seniority within the organisation.

Bear in mind the following good practice tips

- Make sure the dismissal meeting takes place in a private setting
- Be quick and direct
- Decide what you are going to say in advance and do not back down. At this stage the decision to dismiss a volunteer has already been made
- Do not attempt to counsel the volunteer as this will send confusing messages to them
- Expect the volunteer to express their emotions but keep your emotions in check
- Follow up the meeting with a letter, re-iterate the decision to dismiss the volunteer as well as outlining the reasons why. Include any information relating to their departure.
- Inform staff, service users and other volunteers of the outcome but do not give reasons for the dismissal
- If the volunteer had responsibilities for certain clients make sure that the clients are informed of the new volunteer who will be assigned to them

## **Under what circumstances should volunteers be suspended immediately?**

There are some occasions on which volunteers can be suspended immediately, while an investigation is carried out. These include but are not limited to acts that constitute gross misconduct such as

- Theft
- Assault
- Acts of violence
- Malicious damage
- Deliberate falsification of documents
- Harassment
- Being under the influence of drugs or alcohol