



Seaton Town Council Constitution

Chapter 28 Volunteer Policy

Marshlands Centre, Harbour Road, Seaton EX12 2LT

01297 21388

townclerk@seaton.gov.uk

INTRODUCTION

Seaton Town Council (“the Council”) recognises that volunteers can make a valuable contribution to the Council’s work in the community and understands the importance of volunteers feeling that the time they give freely is appreciated. A committed group of volunteers are a valuable asset to the town.

POLICY STATEMENT

This policy applies to individuals undertaking work or duties on behalf of the Council in a voluntary capacity. It does not apply to councillors, officers or those who have a contractual relationship with the Council. The relationship with volunteers is non-contractual and no working relationship is created or implied at any time, however, the Council recognises the importance of having clear guidelines in place to manage expectations of both the Council and volunteers.

The aim of this policy is to ensure that all volunteers remain safe and feel valued when volunteering on Council-led projects. It provides a framework within which the Council will manage volunteers and what volunteers may expect in return, from the Council.

Whilst officers and councillors may identify volunteering opportunities, these must be approved by the Town Clerk or Deputy Town Clerk, in consultation with the Chairman.

PRINCIPLES

The Council appreciates that volunteers contribute their time, skills and knowledge freely for many reasons and will support personal aspirations and professional ambitions wherever it is reasonably practicable and appropriate to do so.

The Council values volunteers and recognise that they should be provided with satisfying roles and the opportunity for personal development as well as the support, training and equipment to undertake these tasks effectively and safely. A volunteer coordinator will be appointed for each volunteering activity and will have primary responsibility for volunteers involved in that activity.

WHO CAN VOLUNTEER

The Council will not discriminate on the basis of any protected characteristics such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation and is committed to providing equal opportunities to all volunteers from all backgrounds and recognises that having a broad, diverse group of volunteers brings a variety of knowledge, skills, creativity and experience and promotes social and community cohesion.

The Council’s Equality and Diversity Policy will always be adhered to in relation to the recruitment and support of volunteers.

If a volunteering opportunity arises where, for example, reasons of health and safety or safeguarding issues, a volunteer may not be suitable, the Council will make reasonable adjustments, insofar as is practicable. Where it is not possible to place a volunteer in their requested role, efforts will be made to find a suitable alternative.

Having a criminal record will not necessarily preclude anyone from volunteering with the Council however this will depend on the nature of the volunteer role and the nature and circumstances of the offence.

The majority of volunteer roles will not require a DBS (Disclosure and Barring Service) check. However, should this be a requirement of the volunteer role, the Council will confirm this at the outset.

RECRUITMENT AND INDUCTION

The Council may recruit volunteers using a range of methods such as word of mouth, advertising, talking with other organisations. It may also directly approach those who have previously assisted the Council with its work.

All volunteers will be required to:

- sign a volunteer agreement, attached as (Appendix A)
- complete a volunteer contact form (Appendix B) and ensure that any changes to their contact details are communicated to either the activity supervisor or the Town Clerk in a timely manner

Completed agreements and contact details will be retained by the Town Clerk, in accordance with the Data Protection Act 2018.

All volunteers will receive an appropriate induction prior to commencing the role assigned to them which will include:

- a brief overview of the work and policies of the Council
- a discussion on volunteer code of conduct and confidentiality
- guidance on health and safety measures and risk assessments associated with their role
- any task related training that is required to enable them to fulfil their role

VOLUNTEER SUPPORT

All volunteers will have a named person as their point of contact.

The Council will invite volunteers to provide feedback on the activity they are engaged in, including evaluation of events and projects and will encourage volunteers to proactively make suggestions for how things might be improved in the future.

Where appropriate, or where required for health and safety purposes or compliance with any other statutory requirement, the Council may offer training to assist volunteers.

Where volunteers are under the age of 18, additional support will be provided and checks undertaken, as necessary.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

The Council has a duty of care to all volunteers and each activity supervisor will complete and share a comprehensive risk assessment.

Volunteers have a responsibility to themselves and others who might be affected by their actions and must always follow the Council's Health and Safety policies and procedures.

Volunteers must disclose to either the Town Clerk or the activity supervisor, details of any medical conditions that may affect their ability to undertake certain activities.

The Council will always inform volunteers of any specific health and safety measures that must be undertaken during a volunteer activity and, if required, will provide volunteers with the necessary personal protective equipment ('PPE').

Volunteers must report any accidents or incidents to the activity supervisor as soon as practicable.

Volunteers are covered by the Council's insurance policy whilst undertaking official duties on behalf of the Council. Insurance cover is not provided for unauthorised actions or any actions undertaken outside of the volunteer agreement.

Volunteers who are required to use their car as part of their volunteering, but not including travel to and from a place of volunteering, must inform their own insurers to arrange suitable cover. This does not usually incur an additional charge but in the unlikely event that it does, and the cost would present a barrier to volunteer, this will need to be brought to the attention of the Town Clerk.

EXPENSES

Volunteers will be reimbursed for any out-of-pocket expenses incurred on behalf of the Council where this has been approved in advance. Receipts must always be provided.

VOLUNTEER CONDUCT

Volunteers represent the Council and must comply with the following:

- undertake volunteering duties to the best of their abilities

- treat other volunteers, members of the public and anyone else they encounter in the course of volunteering, fairly and courteously
- adhere to decisions taken by the Council or its officers and follow all reasonable instructions
- comply with all health and safety procedures and wear and PPE provided
- wear appropriate clothing, including footwear, provide identification if required and take necessary steps to protect themselves in the environment they are working in. For example, through the use of sunscreen and a hat
- not behave in a way that could bring the Council into disrepute, this includes behaving in an appropriate manner online and when using social media.
- return any equipment / clothing supplied at the end of their volunteer activity

Volunteers may, from time to time, have access to personal data or sensitive information about the work of the Council, its volunteers and staff and other organisations. Volunteers will only be given access to personal or sensitive information if it is required to fulfil the specific activity for which they are volunteering and any such disclosure will be approved, in advance, by the Town Clerk. It is an absolute requirement, both during and after volunteering, that confidentiality is maintained and that no information is passed to another individual or third party, unless required to do so by law.

In the event of a serious complaint or inappropriate or dangerous behaviour, the nominated activity supervisor will discuss this directly with the Town Clerk, who will advise on an appropriate course of action.

The Council reserves the right not to assign further activities to a volunteer if, in the absolute discretion of the Town Clerk, it is considered in the best interests of the volunteer, the Council or the wider public. The Council will always act transparently and fairly.

RIGHT TO LEAVE

Volunteers are not contracted and are under no obligation to give notice if they no longer wish to give their time. However, it is greatly appreciated if volunteers can provide advance notice if they are unable to undertake their volunteer role or wish to end their volunteer agreement with the Council. This not only means the Council is able to reallocate the task but also provides the Council with the opportunity to thank the individual for their volunteer contributions.