



**Volunteering for Iminster Town Council
(Volunteer Policy)**

Approved by Council 24 June 2014

Volunteering for Ilminster Town Council

Introduction

This policy has been compiled after drawing on the expertise and advice of other organisations which host and manage volunteers, our Insurance provider and Town Council staff

This will be an over-arching policy which will apply to all persons engaged in volunteer work for the Ilminster Town Council.

An Equality Analysis will be completed and an action plan drafted if appropriate.

1. Aims and principles

At Ilminster Town Council (ITC), we value the time and effort that volunteers give to the organisation and community. This policy has been developed in recognition and support of our volunteers. It aims to make sure that they are treated fairly and consistently so that they can have the best possible experience during their involvement with ITC.

By creating and supporting volunteering we feel we will be better able to meet the aims of ITC and enhance its engagement with the local community.

This policy is of relevance to volunteers, staff and Councillors who all need to be familiar with and understand its contents.

- We want to involve volunteers because we recognise that some of our areas of work can be enhanced by volunteers who bring expertise, experience and dedicated time
- We recognise that volunteers can make a valuable contribution to ITC and to the wider community
- We believe that volunteering can benefit the health and wellbeing of individuals, and communities
- Volunteering can contribute to an individual's own learning experiences, provide opportunities to develop new skills and access training and improve job prospects
- We value the role of volunteers and will be clear about our expectations of them and what they can expect from us.

2. Expectations

A volunteer for Ilminster Town Council can expect:

- To be part of an organisation whose culture includes a belief that volunteering should be enjoyable as well as rewarding and can have a positive impact for volunteers and the community
- individual respect and recognition and a sense of value
- to be listened to and provided with constructive feedback
- a friendly, supportive, healthy and safe environment in which to work on a voluntary basis, with appropriate insurance cover in place
- to know who they are answerable to, and to whom they can talk to if they have concerns or ideas
- an environment which embraces two way communication and values the volunteer's input
- clarity about the work involved and the commitment required
- recognition from ITC that people have freedom to volunteer and can say no
- training, support and resources (including any regulatory training) to enable volunteers to make a valued contribution
- recognition that volunteers might need flexible arrangements regarding the amount of time and level of commitment that they are able to give. We will aim to work within these constraints
- That we will recognise and value any level of commitment that volunteers are able to give
- Volunteering to complement the work of paid staff
- A volunteering environment that is free from discrimination

In return we expect a volunteer to:

- Be reliable

- Be honest
- ensure that their behaviour does not bring any harm to the Council's image and standing and wherever possible promotes the Town Council in a positive light
- co-operate with paid members of staff, other volunteers and the public in a way which creates a pleasant working and volunteering environment
- respect the need for confidentiality where volunteers have access to any personal or organisationally sensitive information and to ensure this information is kept secure and follow data protection or other relevant and appropriate guidelines
- ensure their volunteering contribution is of the highest standard
- engage with the aims and objectives of the volunteer project, and give constructive feedback
- take responsibility for their own eligibility to volunteer for ITC
- comply with the Town Council's policies, procedures (including financial regulations) and seek advice if there are any queries or potential conflicts of interest
- neither offer nor accept any money or gifts in connection with the volunteer role
- be clear about what they are able to commit to and the contribution they are able to make
- participate in relevant training organised by the Town Council

3. What defines a Volunteer at Ilminster Town Council?

Volunteers offer their free time, experience and knowledge to help perform a service or function for no financial reward. A clear distinction exists between volunteers who are under no obligation to volunteer and those who are employees who receive a salary and a contract of employment.

4. Recruitment of Volunteers

We want to encourage interest in working as a volunteer for ITC from all members of the community as the Town Council is committed to equal opportunities. Care will be taken to ensure that all equality issues are taken into account when recruiting volunteers. The acceptance of volunteer assistance is made with the sole selection criterion being the individual's suitability to carry out the agreed tasks.

Information on all ITC volunteering opportunities will be advertised on ITC's website and on the Town Council notice board (in the Market Square). Suitability for volunteering placements will be assessed through informal interviews/discussion usually between the volunteer applicant and the person who would be supervising the volunteer.

TC will not recruit volunteers as a replacement for paid employees.

Where a task or project is considered to be suitable to be undertaken by volunteers a role guide will be compiled which includes any expected experience, knowledge or skills. It is important that it is recognised by all parties that there is a clear distinction between a **job description** for paid employees, which uses terms such as 'requirements' compared to a **role guide** for volunteers, which highlights 'expectation.'

A copy of the role guide and the volunteer policy will be given to every volunteer recruited.

Details of applicants who are not recruited as volunteers, together with any associated documents such as interview notes, will be retained by the Town Council for a period of six months and then destroyed. This is in case any applicant makes a complaint about the recruitment process.

Two personal references will be requested for all volunteers.

If specific knowledge, experience or a qualification is required to undertake the volunteering role satisfactorily volunteers will be asked to provide the evidence that they hold the qualification e.g. certificate or have the experience / knowledge e.g. by means of a reference.

If the Town Clerk deems that the volunteer role requires a Disclosure and Barring Services Check the costs will be met by the Town Council.

5. Time Commitment

The Town Council recognises that the amount of time an individual may be able to commit to volunteering will vary. Volunteers may only undertake tasks by prior arrangement and wherever possible the arrangements should be made between the volunteer and the supervisor at least 48 hours in advance.

6 Induction and Training

The Town Council is committed to providing induction, training and support activities for volunteers to enhance their experience of volunteering so that every volunteer feels valued and appreciated; training will be designed to enable volunteers to make their contribution in a safe and effective manner.

All volunteers will be required to sign a Volunteer Agreement when they are recruited which will clearly state their role and any training that will be required. This is to ensure that there is clarity about what is expected from both the volunteer and Ilminster Town Council. This agreement is not a contract of employment.

Each volunteer will be asked to supply basic personal information, contact details and a self-certified medical declaration. A training record will be kept for each volunteer.

A volunteer is allowed to see their own records.

Information about volunteers will be treated as confidential, held securely and destroyed when an individual ceases to volunteer unless the volunteer has agreed otherwise e.g. for the purpose of providing employment references.

We will provide a welcome/induction process, which will include an outline of the Councils' role and responsibilities, health and safety, data protection and equalities, and is aimed at making sure volunteers understand their volunteering environment and clarify how they are expected to carry out their work.

All induction training will be delivered by an experienced supervisor and will be done in the most appropriate way for both the volunteer and the tasks / project – i.e some may be one-to-one induction others may be group induction

7. Confidentiality/Data Protection

As part of their role, volunteers may have access to personal or organisationally sensitive information; when this is the case appropriate training will be mandatory for the volunteer, so that they can understand and be clear about their responsibilities and how to recognise and deal with any actual or potential data breach.

8. Equal Opportunities , Respect and Dignity

The Town Council values diversity and is committed to working in a way that treats individuals with respect and dignity, this includes the way we work with the public, volunteers and staff; All volunteers are expected to behave in keeping with this commitment.

ITC and all volunteers must comply with the requirements of the Equality Act 2010, and specifically the General Equality Duty, (GED). ITC must have due regard to:

- Eliminating discrimination, harassment and victimisation
- Advancing equality of opportunity (this means for example removing disadvantage, taking account of disability, meeting different people's needs, encouraging people to participate in public life)
- Fostering good relations (this means tackling prejudice and promoting understanding)

ITC will actively encourage volunteering through promotion to relevant networks and support groups and all literature will be written in plain English.

Equalities monitoring forms will be included on Volunteer Agreements.

9. Expenses

In the course of volunteering, relevant expenses may sometimes be offered. This may vary according to the tasks involved. This will be clarified at the beginning of any volunteering placement. Any allowance for mileage will be paid at the appropriate HMRC approved rate

10. Safe Working Environment

We will provide volunteers with a safe working environment. ITC will undertake our duty of care to volunteers under Section 3 of the Health & Safety at Work etc. Act 1974, the Management of Health & Safety at Work Regulations 1999. Volunteers are required to adhere to relevant health and safety policies, guidance and notices. Volunteers must remember their duty of care towards themselves and the people around them, and not act in a way that might endanger themselves or others.

10.1 Equipment

Where the use of equipment is needed, we will ensure that all volunteers have access to the necessary supervision and training. If volunteers are required to wear uniform or protective clothing we will supply these at no cost to the volunteer. An equipment / machinery training / competency record will be completed where relevant and kept with the volunteer's records.

10.2 Lone Working

If volunteers are working alone, Ilminster Town Council will make sure that volunteers are given training to ensure that they are fully equipped to understand the risks and precautionary measures that should be taken. Volunteers must adhere to any Lone Working procedures used by the Town Council. Volunteers will not be permitted to work alone until full training has been provided and a risk assessment carried out.

10.3 Supervision

We will ensure that all volunteers receive the supervision and support needed to carry out the work required. We will be clear about who to contact if advice or assistance is needed. ITC will endeavour to ensure that supervisors have received suitable supervisory training and that they are experienced and equipped with the necessary skills to support and manage the volunteering experience. Supervisors will ensure Risk Assessments are carried out where necessary, and risks are identified, managed, mitigated against or removed. All supervisors will have attended equalities training.

10.4 Insurance

All volunteers will be covered by the relevant insurance policy in the name of ITC whilst engaged in any voluntary work for ITC, as long as they have completed and signed the necessary Volunteer Agreement Form, agreed to the relevant terms and conditions of their volunteer placement and followed relevant guidelines. Anyone engaged in activities on behalf of ITC will be covered by ITC's comprehensive Public Liability and Employer's Liability (which includes cover for injuries to the volunteer whilst on volunteering activity) and Personal Accident Insurance. We will advise volunteers that in the event of a volunteer aged over 75 years needing to claim under ITC's Personal Accident Insurance, the payments may be restricted. (This needs to be checked with Insurance Company)

The personal property of volunteers is not covered by ITC insurance; volunteers will be advised to ensure their possessions are covered by their own insurance. Volunteers should check with their insurance company if they are using their own car for any volunteering activity.

11. Acceptable Behaviour

ITC aims to maintain a positive reputation in the community and expects volunteers to portray the Council in a suitable manner. When volunteering for ITC, volunteers are representatives of the organisation and should not do or say anything to bring the Council's image and standing into disrepute.

Volunteers will be issued with identification badges and are expected to either wear them or produce them for inspection if asked whilst they are undertaking volunteering duties.

12. Support & Supervision

It is vital that feedback is provided to volunteers regularly. If standards have fallen below a level which is acceptable, then it will be appropriate for a supervisor to address this. It is important to recognise that volunteers will not be subject to disciplinary action. The Council will not however accept poor standards of behaviour or performance from anyone regardless of status and the Council may decide not to continue with the volunteer placement.

At least once a year a supervisor will have discussion with the volunteer about the tasks they have done as a volunteer and any training that may be useful. A simple written record will be made of the discussion and signed by both the volunteer and the supervisor and a copy given to the volunteer and a copy retained on the volunteer's record.

13. Dealing with problems

We welcome feedback from volunteers and encourage an environment which embraces two way communication and values the volunteer's input.

Volunteers should discuss any problems associated with their placement with their supervisor, and we will try to resolve these immediately and informally.

It is important to recognise that volunteers will not be subject to disciplinary action. However, the Council will not accept poor standards of behaviour from anyone regardless of status and the Council may decide not to continue with the volunteer placement.

13.1 Complaints from a Volunteer

The Town Council aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently.

If a volunteer has concerns about the way they have been treated by other volunteers, members of staff or the public, or about the behaviour of staff and other volunteers, they should first raise this with their supervisor contact. If they are unable to do this, or feel their concern has not been dealt with properly, they can approach the Town Clerk. The Town Clerk will review the complaint and respond to the volunteer. The aim of dealing with any complaint is for it to be dealt with promptly and to try and achieve a positive and amicable solution.

13.2 Complaints about a Volunteer

If a complaint is made about a volunteer, then we will investigate further. The course of action will depend on the level of seriousness of the complaint. The types of action that may be implemented are an informal discussion to resolve the issue, addressing any additional needs such as training or in very serious cases it may be necessary to ask the volunteer to leave.

14. Finishing Volunteering

- Volunteers are not subject to contractual obligations and are not required to formally give or receive notice; however the Council and the volunteer should endeavour to provide as much notice as possible of their intention to end the placement if this differs from what was agreed at the outset
- All equipment must be returned to ITC before the end of the placement
- References may be provided for volunteers to help them with their future career prospects.

15. Policy Review

We will consult with volunteers and service managers to review this policy regularly to ensure that it remains relevant in accordance with volunteering best practice. It will be formally reviewed every 3 years.

16. Related Policies and Strategies

Equality Act 2010

Health & Safety at Work Act etc. 1974

ITC Lone Working Procedure