



# Volunteer Strategy 2024-2027

## STRATEGY AIMS:

Recognition and appreciation of volunteers will be a fundamental aspect of the Council's arrangements - volunteers will be treated with respect and regarded as a member of the team. We know that people are our best assets, and the Council will work with communities and individuals to maximise their voluntary contribution to its services and activities, giving them the appropriate support to enable them to fulfil their volunteering roles. Our core aims will be:

- Volunteering and participation is valued, supported, and enabled
- We actively promote the value of volunteering for all, celebrating the contributions already being made and encouraging everyone who wants to take part
- We have an environment and culture which celebrates volunteering and all of its benefits
- The places and spaces where we volunteer are developed, supported, and sustained
- We promote diverse, quality, and inclusive opportunities for everyone to get involved and stay involved

## ALIGNMENT WITH COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Start Life Well	Live and Age Well	Prosper and Flourish	Clean and Tidy	A Strong and Sustainable Council
<p>Look at ways to get young people into volunteering - create targeted volunteering campaigns and outreach to engage underrepresented groups, including young people, linking in with local colleges and schools.</p> <p>Look at ways to support volunteering for children in our care/young asylum seekers – to provides support for social experience, mental health, work readiness and English speak skills.</p>	<p>Enhance community engagement and support residents to volunteers in their local areas</p> <p>Support wellbeing and activity in adults of all ages</p> <p>To promote volunteer groups to the unemployed, retired and people that have spare time to keep healthy, active and help with social interaction, sense of purpose, wellbeing, and career opportunities.</p> <p>Volunteering can be available for everyone, we will promote diversity and equality and inclusive volunteering opportunities for everyone to get involved and stay involved.</p> <p>Wellbeing and support – Volunteering activities and our Volunteers are supported and nurtured to ensure that their vital work in communities continues.</p>	<p>Supporting volunteer groups to set up and expand to regenerate the borough, helping to make the borough an attractive place to live and visit, supporting established volunteer and community groups.</p>	<p>Work with local voluntary sector infrastructure and businesses to support volunteer groups so that they are capable and understand the process and opportunities to access funds to support volunteering projects to keep our areas looking attractive, maintained and offer vital services within the community.</p> <p>Encourage a sense of community, by creating connections among volunteers, create a supportive environment where volunteers and groups can collaborate and build relationships.</p>	<p>Working with departments/ managers to promote volunteering opportunities within the Council, to upskill and provide life skills which may lead to potential employment opportunities to unemployed people internal and externally.</p> <p>Employee Volunteer Scheme to enable staff to volunteer to support our local community.</p> <p>Reaching out and linking in with volunteer groups to promote partnership working within the community.</p> <p>Recruitment and retention – Ensure that we are supporting our volunteers, ensuring they are skilled, trained, communicated and their work is well promoted.</p> <p>Reward, recognising and raising the profile of volunteering - Volunteers are recognised, listened to, and celebrated for their valuable contributions.</p> <p>Encouraging and developing a vibrant and effective voluntary sector within the Borough which is appropriately skilled and enabled to lever in external funding and provide community support to the vulnerable and where it is most needed.</p>



## PRINCIPLES

Principle 1 - Recruitment and Retention	Principle 2 - Reward, recognise and raising the profile of volunteering	Principle 3 - Wellbeing and support
To ensure volunteering is open to all. We know that currently the profile of those who volunteer does not reflect the profile of the borough, and, therefore, many people do not access the benefits that being a volunteer can bring. We want to change this. People who want to give their time should be able to easily find an opportunity and access volunteering no matter where they are from, live or their protected characteristics. Many look to volunteering to enhance their work skills and we want to support organisations to ensure their volunteering programme can create appropriate pathways into work.	We understand that residents cannot take up opportunities if they do not know about them. We want everyone to have access to volunteering and feel that this is an activity they can take part in, a normal part of life, and gain the benefits from this way of taking part. We want people to feel valued for their contributions to supporting communities to thrive. We need to celebrate and raise the profile of volunteering.	Volunteers are often the backbone to organisations; they provide much-needed support in so many different areas. Many grassroots organisations and community groups are volunteer led and are only able to function because of volunteers. We want to make sure all groups and organisations who have volunteers are fully supported through best practice, support, and recognition. We also want to enable the voluntary sector to thrive within the borough so there is a network of support for our most vulnerable residents and a sense of community spirit and resilience is encouraged and reinforced.

## ACTIONS

**This is a new strategy that runs until 2027 (strive phase). Over the next couple of years as our volunteer actions and plans develop, we will review and consider if any additional actions should be included.**

Principles	Actions and timescales	Survive: Years 1 - 2 – Quarter to be delivered 2024/25, 2025/26	Strive: Years: 3 - 5	Thrive: Years 6 - 10
<b>Principle 1 Recruitment and Retention</b>	Groups need more volunteers, we need to look at how we can support volunteering and help signpost residents to groups in our area	Q3 24/25		
	Need to consider expanding the opportunities available within the Council for volunteers – more flexible ways for people who have work or family commitments to consider	Q2 25/26		
	Events to showcase volunteering, such as Taster Days and Open Days to be considered across the borough for both Council volunteering and groups to attend to attract new people	Q2 25/26		
	Volunteering for all – ensure opportunities available for everyone -support potential volunteers with the recruitment process through telephone, face to face discussions, email, or digital options	Q3 24/25		
	Look at ways to get young people into volunteering - create targeted volunteering campaigns and outreach to engage underrepresented groups, including young people, linking in with local colleges and schools	Q4 24/25		
	Ensure the Council have a volunteer point of contact for current volunteers, volunteer groups or potential volunteers to liaise with	Q1 24/25		
	Look at ways to support volunteering for children in our care/young asylum seekers – to provides support for social, experience, mental health, work readiness and English speak skills.	Q4 24/25		
	Run volunteer publicity and promotions campaign to raise awareness of volunteering as a leisure time activity and to increase volume of enquiries about volunteering opportunities in the borough	Q1 25/26		
	We will use volunteer case studies which feature and celebrate real-life experiences of volunteers to help promote volunteering, to spread the key messages about what volunteering can offer those who take part	Q3 24/25		



<b>Principle 2 Awareness and Appreciation</b>	Improving the promotion of volunteering work that is undertaken by our active volunteer community	Q3 24/25		
	To make volunteering more recognised, visible, and valued in the community and to provide every individual, no matter what their background, with the opportunity to volunteer and contribute	Q2 25/26		
	Promoting volunteering with the use of the Council magazine – regular information shared to celebrate volunteers	Q2 25/26		
	Enhance communication and promote volunteering using social media	Q3 24/25		
	Develop volunteer website to hold key information and updates, open this up to groups to share and attract new people	Q4 24/25		
	Consider options for recognition and thanking volunteers across the borough, collectively celebrating the contribution volunteers make with events such as the Mayors Volunteer Champions Awards	Q1 24/25		
	Ensure that opportunities and skills gained from volunteering are recognised in Council recruitment practices	Q4 24/25		
	Promote volunteering on key dates such as National Volunteers' Week to share volunteers' stories	Q1 25/26		
	Internally we will encourage managers to give references to volunteers where possible as part of the volunteer through to employment pathway	Q3 24/25		
	Work with voluntary infrastructure agencies and partners to mutually support volunteering in the borough, to jointly promote, work together and share data on the positive impact of volunteering in our borough	Q4 24/25		

<b>Principle 3 Wellbeing and Support</b>	The council to offer an Employee Volunteering Scheme to support community groups and to encourage more people to volunteer	Q1 24/25		
	We will develop more volunteer networking and information sharing opportunities – with Volunteer Forums established every 6 months	Q1 25/26		
	Develop training offer (face to face/ e-learning) to support volunteering and enhance knowledge and training – offer internal training (safeguarding, mental health, first aid, manual handling)	Q4 24/25		
	Explore opportunities and signposting for voluntary sector to source funding support to enable groups to be able to apply for funding	Q4 24/25		
	Consider pilot of small community funding pot to help with costs linked to volunteer projects, tools, equipment, PPE, to address challenges to sustainability of volunteer activity.		Q1 26/27	
	Develop internal Volunteer Champions to support and champion volunteering within the Council and our community, involving staff and elected members so they can help promote and share volunteering best practice in their communities	Q1 25/26		
	Ensuring there is strong knowledge of community voluntary groups across the whole borough to ensure that support is offered to all our wards and community areas, information is shared widely with groups and volunteers so they can access support available	Q1 25/26		
	To work with our business sector to look at how volunteering can be supported and increase engagement through social value, and businesses can be recognised for providing support to the borough	Q2 25/26		

Measure of success	Performance indicator/outcome	Outturn position 2023/24	Survive: Years 1 - 2	Strive: Years 3 - 5	Thrive: Years 6 - 10
<b>Performance measure</b>	<p>Increased participation of volunteers within community volunteering groups</p> <p>More volunteer roles are available within the Council</p> <p>Increase in young volunteers</p> <p>Develop a training package for volunteers/ voluntary groups</p> <p>Volunteers gain opportunities in paid employment</p> <p>Volunteers feel valued and appreciated for their contributions</p>	Not Applicable – New Strategy	<p>Volunteer Microsite developed to share/promote volunteering</p> <p>Create 5 new volunteers' roles internally during 2024-2026</p> <p>10% increase in young volunteers within Council</p> <p>Monitor training offered and number of training days attended</p> <p>Volunteer recruitment review 2025/26</p> <p>Survey / Exit discussions 2025/26 to commence surveys</p>		