



Belfast City Council

Report to:	Development Committee
Subject:	Volunteer Framework and pilot Investors in Volunteers planning.
Date:	21 August 2012
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1	Relevant Background Information
1.1	Belfast City Council offers volunteering opportunities across a range of departments and sections. At present there is no corporate volunteer policy and volunteer management and support procedures are inconsistent and ad hoc.
1.2	Community Services involves volunteers as an integral part of its work. Volunteers are involved in a range of activities across the community centres, play service and Youth Forum. These activities include after schools and youth clubs, disability groups, seniors and summer schemes.
1.3	This is an opportune time to look at volunteers and volunteering. The European Union designated 2011 the European Year of Volunteering (EYV2011). This coincided with the 10 th anniversary of the UN International Year of the Volunteer. BCC marked the Year with a Volunteer Celebration event in City Hall for its volunteers who support our community services programme.
1.4	During 2011 Volunteer Now, the regional organisation working to promote, enhance and support volunteering, convened a forum of local councils to develop a draft volunteer policy framework for local authorities. Belfast City Council was represented on this group through Community Services. The draft framework was completed in December 2011. This framework is based on good practice guidance for volunteer involving organisations. The other councils represented on the working group were Antrim, Castlereagh, Craigavon, Derry City, Down, Fermanagh, Moyle, Newry & Mourne, Omagh and Strabane.
1.5	In March 2012 DSD published 'Join In, Get Involved: Build a Better Future. The

	Volunteering Strategy and Action Plan for Northern Ireland'. The Strategy sets out the objectives identified as required to create the conditions that will enable volunteering to grow and flourish. Objective 3 of the strategy is 'Improving the Experience'. One of the priorities under this is to extend volunteering in the public sector.
1.6	Volunteering has been particularly high on the agenda with the 2012 Olympic Games taking place in London. Volunteers from Northern Ireland have been involved as Games Makers undertaking a wide range of roles many of these were behind the scenes and were vital in supporting the Games experience. The Olympic Torch Run came to Belfast on 3 June. Volunteer Now led on the volunteering theme for the London Olympics and one of the aims of their 2012 Project is to 'use the enthusiasm generated by the Games as a catalyst for inspiring increased volunteering'.
1.7	In August 2013 the World Police and Fire Games will be held in Belfast: only the third time since 1985 that the event has come to Europe. Volunteers will play a key role in making these games happen. The publicity from the Games should be harnessed to raise the profile of volunteering.

2	Key Issues
2.1	In 2010 Community Services commissioned Volunteer Now to carry out research on the 'impact of volunteering' on BCC community and play centres. The resulting Volunteer Impact Assessment report presented 'an overwhelmingly positive picture of volunteering' in the centres. It also identified that for every £1 invested in volunteering by Community Services there is a return of £3.45.
2.2	In 2011/2012 volunteers across the service contributed over 68,000 hours to our centres and projects. This ongoing level of support allows the service to extend both the range and impact of our service provision.
2.3	One of the recommendations of the Volunteer Impact Assessment was a review of Community Services' current volunteer management practices. This health check was completed in May 2011. The development plan coming from the health check identified a need to finalise a volunteer framework for the Service, as well as the development of appropriate procedures for its implementation.
2.4	Currently expenditure in support of volunteer management and development is not specifically classified. In order to collate volunteer expenditure across the service and identify the expenditure types we will work with Business Support. A dedicated volunteer budget supports our commitment to encouraging, nurturing and maintaining volunteer involvement in our services.
2.5	The attached draft volunteer framework has been developed in line with VN's draft volunteer policy framework for local authorities
2.6	If implemented, it will rationalise and consolidate current volunteer processes and procedures. The implementation plan will therefore refine associated procedures, including recruitment & selection, support & supervision, expenses, training and complaints.
2.7	Aligned to this programme, we have engaged Volunteer Now to support us to

	development a plan to achieve Investing in Volunteers, the UK quality standard for volunteer-involving organisations.
2.8	Community Services currently involves volunteers as an integral part of its work. Piloting the draft volunteer framework and its associated procedures for one year in Community Services would allow it to be tested and reviewed in a 'live' environment.
2.9	This test period will run to June 2013. The learning from this pilot phase and from the liV process will inform the implementation of a volunteer policy across council.
2.10	The service is proactively working with other departments across council to support and inform their engagement with volunteers. This work will continue and will be positively informed during the pilot period.

3	Recommendations
3.1	<p>Committee is asked to agree the following recommendations:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> i. To pilot the Volunteer Framework within Community Services for the period to March 2013. ii. To review the framework and associated procedures on completion of the pilot phase. iii. To work with other the volunteer-involving services across Council to roll out the framework with a view to achieving corporate liV. iv. To consider the budget implications across <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment • Training • Support • Celebration; and • Expenses

4	Decision Tracking
	Recommended pilot to be completed by April 2013

5	Documents Attached
	Draft Volunteer Framework and associated pilot implementation plan

6	Abbreviations
	<p>VN – Volunteer Now liV – Investing in Volunteers</p>