



Edenbridge Town Council

Town Clerk: Caroline Leet



Adopted: February 2020

VOLUNTEER POLICY

1. Introduction

Edenbridge Town Council acknowledges that there are many people in the community of Edenbridge who work to help shape the local service delivery, promoting community cohesion and positively influencing decision making. Many of the Town Council's activities involve working in partnership with community and voluntary groups, and also volunteers work directly with the Town Council for a number of reasons. For example:

- To increase our contact with the local community we serve
- To help ensure our services reflect the needs of our community
- To increase skills, experience, perspectives and diversity in the Town Council's activities
- To temporarily increase our capacity

The Town Council is keen to promote volunteering opportunities and develop a diverse range of suitable activities.

The following policy also applies where activities are facilitated by the Town Council.

2. Our commitment to volunteering opportunities

Edenbridge Town Council will endeavour to provide opportunities for people in the community to be involved in a variety of schemes to enable them to contribute to our ongoing development.

Edenbridge Town Council does not aim to introduce volunteers to replace paid staff. We expect that staff will work positively with volunteers and where appropriate will actively seek to involve them in suitable community projects.

We regard volunteering as an activity where someone freely gives their time to help an organisation or an individual to whom they are not related. In other words, volunteers are not paid staff, and do not have a legally binding contractual relationship with the Council.

Volunteers' expertise should complement and add value to the skills of staff. In many instances, volunteers can develop a range of support to service users that cannot be provided solely by paid staff, and the Council welcomes volunteers in all service areas. The Council is committed to engaging with volunteers in a way that complements and expands service delivery.

We will provide all volunteers with an induction to the organisation as well as an induction and training tailored to the volunteering opportunity. All volunteers will have a named person as their main point of contact for the scheme for which they are appointed.

3. Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

People choose to volunteer for a variety of reasons, for example:

- To socialise and get to know the local community
- To put something back into society and make a difference
- To regain or learn new skills
- As a route to employment
- To help the environment

All prospective volunteers will be interviewed to find out what they would like to do, their skills, suitability and how best their potential might be realised. This will be an informal chat with the person/s running the project.

The Town Council is not obliged to accept every person on to a scheme/project. This may be because there are limited spaces/volunteering opportunities; specialist skill set required; suitability to the volunteering opportunity.

Volunteers will be required to register and complete a declaration form and to adhere to the appropriate Health and Safety standards which will be advised by the scheme/project/committee leader; or can be obtained from the Town Clerk. Volunteers are expected to respect other volunteers, staff and councillors.

4. Health and Safety

The Council has a duty of care to avoid exposing our volunteers to health and safety risks. All volunteers will be made aware of our Health and Safety Policy and any practical safety concerns as part of their induction. Volunteers are expected to comply with the Council's Health and Safety Policy.

All volunteer roles will be risk assessed, covering both the tasks involved and the environment in which they will be conducted. In addition, where a volunteer makes us aware of a pre-existing medical condition or disability, an individual risk assessment may also be necessary.

Individual volunteers are covered by Edenbridge Town Council's volunteers insurance; members of a partner organisation as a group must be covered by the group's insurance. Volunteers under the Town Council's policy will be covered between the ages of 16 to 80; (anyone over 80 would need to sign a separate declaration).

5. Protection of Children and Vulnerable Adults and Safeguarding

If the volunteer is to work in a regulated activity within the Town Council, the Council will carry out enhanced DBS checks and ensure the volunteer is not on the barred list with the Disclosure and Barring Service. The Council will ensure there is a proportionate balance between civil liberties and safeguarding vulnerable groups, including children.

The Town Council has a duty of care towards its volunteers and will ensure that volunteers are aware of any potential risks and safeguarding of others. All volunteers receive the appropriate support and supervision in their activity. The level of supervision will match the nature of the role and the experience of the volunteer, and may need to be supplied by a third party (not funded by Edenbridge Town Council).

6. Problem Solving

We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage. A procedure has been drawn up for dealing with complaints either by or about volunteers. A copy of the procedure is included in the Volunteers Handbook.

7. Confidentiality and Data Protection

Confidential information refers to any data or information relating to Edenbridge Town Council whether business or personal, which would reasonably be considered to be private or proprietary to the Town Council and that is not generally known and where the release of that Confidential Information could reasonably be expected to cause harm to the Town Council.

Volunteers agree that they will not disclose, divulge, reveal, report or use, for any purpose, any Confidential Information which has been obtained, except as authorised by Edenbridge Town Council or as required by law. The obligations of confidentiality will apply during the term of volunteering and will survive indefinitely upon ceasing to volunteer/end of the project.

All written and oral information and material disclosed or provided by the Town Council to you for your information is given in good faith, and not for the purposes of publication in any form, unless prior agreement has been given by the Town Council.

8. Expenses

Expenses for travel outside the parish carried out on behalf of the Town Council will be met.

9. Problem Solving and Complaints

We aim to identify and solve problems at the earliest possible stage. As volunteers are not employees, they are unable to use the Council's Grievance Policy and Procedure. However, they are entitled to use the Council's Complaints Procedure.

Complaints by volunteers should be raised in the first instance with a member of the Town Council staff and dealt with informally where possible. If a complaint is brought against a volunteer, this will be investigated by the relevant member of staff.

All Complaints will be reported to the Town Clerk by the member of staff or councillor responsible for the volunteer scheme/project/committee. Complaints may need to be investigated fully by the Town Clerk. If the complaint is about the Town Clerk, this will need to be reported to the Chairman of the Town Council.

Every attempt will be made to resolve the matter as quickly and informally as possible. If the issue cannot be satisfactorily resolved, then the Town Council reserves the right to tell the volunteer that their services are no longer required with immediate effect.

10. Termination of activity

Where appropriate, the role and placement of volunteers may be terminated by the Town Clerk at one week's notice, or immediately where inappropriate behaviour has occurred.