



Ross-on-Wye Town Council

Volunteer Policy

Raising the Standard

1. Introduction

This policy sets out the broad principles for voluntary involvement in Ross-on-Wye Town Council. It is of relevance to everyone concerned with recruiting, supporting, developing and managing volunteers and promoting volunteering activity.

2. Vision

Ross-on-Wye Town Council's commitment to people and place will continue to be expressed through active partnerships with individuals and communities, reflecting the volunteering vision and spirit of its original purpose whilst striving to position itself as a leader in the field of volunteering.

3. Commitment to Volunteering

The voluntary principle on which councils were established is one of our greatest strengths. Volunteers are an established and integral part of civic life. Without their active participation, councils would be unable to thrive and prosper.

Ross-on-Wye Town Council is committed to working with volunteers and community groups to meet its founding purposes and objectives. Volunteering involvement in appropriate tasks and projects is welcomed and encouraged by the Council.

4. Values and Principles behind Volunteering

Ross-on-Wye Town Council:

- values volunteering as an inclusive act of participation that is itself important in promoting the Council's work.
- appreciates that volunteering is enjoyable and can change and enrich the lives of individuals. Successful volunteer involvement takes account of individuals' motivations, aspirations and fulfilment.
- acknowledges volunteering as of wider benefit to society and its beliefs and values.
- recruits volunteers on a task-led basis to match the Council's needs with volunteers' skills, knowledge, experience and motivation.
- respects volunteers in both listening to and learning from what they have to say.
- values and respects the individual through providing equal opportunities for active involvement within the scope of the Council's needs and resources.

- values volunteering as integral to its work and recognises the ‘gift of time’ from volunteers as critical to its well-being and success.
- distinguishes volunteering from employment, and puts its flexibility and informality to best effect to complement the work of paid staff.

5. Defining volunteers and the Council’s relationship with them.

A volunteer is someone who, without expectation of financial compensation beyond reimbursement of expenses, performs a task at the request of and on behalf of Ross-on-Wye Town Council.

The importance of maintaining a balanced effective and mutually beneficial staff/volunteer partnership is essential. It is based on the principle that Council staff provide structure, organisation, direction and day-to-day management together with appropriate levels of accountability, while volunteers add value to the Council’s work by performing a range of supportive roles, contributing time, flexibility and specialist skills. Thus, within this framework, volunteering is a legitimate and crucial activity, which is supported and encouraged by the Council but is not intended to be a substitute for paid employment.

The volunteer role is a ‘gift relationship’, binding only in honour, trust and mutual understanding. No enforceable obligation, contractual or otherwise, can be imposed on volunteers to attend, give or be set a minimum amount of time to carry out the tasks provided. Likewise the Council cannot be compelled to provide regular work or payment or other benefit for any activity undertaken.

Although volunteers offer time freely and willingly and without binding obligation, there is a presumption of mutual support and reliability. Reciprocal expectations are acknowledged – both in what the Council expects of volunteers and what volunteers expect of the Council – as well as attainment of high standards upon which the Council’s reputation depends.

6. Recruitment and Selection

The Council is committed to equal opportunities and believes that volunteering should be open to all.

7. Responsibilities

The Council acknowledges the need for a clear and consistent organisational framework for voluntary involvement, which creates a positive climate for development.

Each volunteer, or group of volunteers, has a designated member of staff, or volunteer, to guide and advise them in their tasks. Volunteers are told who to approach for support and have regular access to that person.

The acceptance of volunteer assistance for a particular role is made on merit, the sole selection criteria being the individual's ability to do the specified task subject to the needs and restrictions of the location.

The Council does not specify a general volunteer upper age limit and recognises the valuable contribution made by older volunteers in terms of knowledge and experience. However, the Council would be irresponsible if it permitted volunteers to continue beyond a point where volunteering is detrimental to their own or other people's health and safety.

Where necessary, the Council pro-actively uses appropriate and various communication channels to recruit volunteers for specific opportunities.

The organiser of any volunteers should submit to the Town Clerk in writing, the names of volunteers and the dates they are working prior to them beginning a task. Individual volunteer involvement begins with a letter of acceptance, usually issued by the Town Clerk.

8. Training and Development

New volunteers are welcomed and provided with a copy of this policy.

The development of training and support for volunteers is a high priority for the Council in order to provide them with the necessary information and skills to carry out their tasks.

Volunteers may want to develop new skills while helping the Council and, where appropriate, are encouraged to take on new roles or assume greater involvement.

Examination of the effective involvement of volunteers is a component in the annual review of performance.

9. Support and Recognition

The Council understands that although volunteers do not seek reward they do appreciate recognition. All staff, and volunteers, responsible for volunteers are encouraged to ensure appropriate acknowledgement on a regular basis. This could range from a simple 'Thank You' to a more formal recognition by the Council for exceptional voluntary support.

Volunteers are given the opportunity to claim reimbursement of agreed reasonable out-of-pocket expenses, subject to production of receipts.

It is recommended Council practice that managers discuss progress with their volunteers on a regular basis. This also gives the opportunity to monitor usefulness of the role, establish whether the volunteer would like to reduce or develop their current contribution, and ensure they feel valued and happy in their role.

The Council's insurance policies include the activities of volunteers and liability for, and towards them.

The Council does not insure personal possessions of volunteers against loss or damage.

10. Data Protection

Personal information recorded about volunteers is stored and maintained with appropriate safeguards for confidentiality. The Town Clerk is the designated Data Manager as defined in the legislation. The Council informs volunteers of their right of access to personal records under the data protection legislation.

11. Confidentiality

The Council advises volunteers of the need for confidentiality where they have access to sensitive Council information which is not public knowledge. Similarly volunteers are expected to maintain the trust the Council places in them to ensure any such information remains confidential.

12. Difficult Situations

The Council aims to treat all volunteers fairly, objectively and consistently. The Town Clerk is jointly and individually responsible for handling problems regarding volunteers conduct or complaints. They seek to ensure that the volunteer's views are heard, noted and acted upon promptly and aim for a positive and amicable solution.

13. Information

The Council provides volunteers with opportunities to attend meetings, policies and reports necessary to carry out their roles. Responsibility for communication rests with the Town Clerk who is expected to include volunteers in appropriate meetings and briefings.

14. Moving On

The Council recognises that volunteers may cease their involvement at any time. Exit interviews are recommended to ascertain why a volunteer is leaving, share any learning points and establish whether they want to be involved again. A volunteer database is maintained by the Town Council and this will be updated to reflect the volunteer's wishes.

Reviewed by the Community, Markets and Tourism Sub-Committee, September 2022

Appendix 1

Ross-on-Wye Town Council

Briefing notes for Stewards and Volunteers

Key Roles:

Event Manager (EM) – overall responsibility for the event

Chief Steward (CS) – as agreed with the EM (if this is not the EM) - responsible for co-ordinating names, shifts, timings, roles, responsibilities, briefings, onsite management

Site Manager – as agreed with the EM, responsible for co-ordinating the location of traders, stalls and other participants onsite at the event

Head of Security – for larger events requiring an employed external security firm, the Head of Security is responsible for ensuring the safety of larger crowds during the event.

Pre-event process	Responsible
Steward Briefing date confirmed a week in advance of event	Event Manager or Chief Steward
Volunteer names with contact details and shift dates/times to be circulated to Town Clerk in advance of briefing	Event Manager or Chief Steward
Key Roles & Emergency Services	Contact name, number
Event Manager	
Chief Steward	
Site Manager	
Head of Security	
Fire	
Police	
First Aid / Ambulance	
Onsite briefing - housekeeping notes	Details
Event date	
Date(s)	
Start time	
End time	
Site plan – printed out for each steward	
Ticketing / event entry process	
Event size, expected attendance	
Arrangements for different groups of attendees, event officials or VIPs	Outline meeting areas, arrival processes, who is attending, who is looking after them, where they are sitting etc
Arrangement for late arrivals	For formal / seated events
Deliveries of equipment to site	Details of access / responsibilities
Keys for storage, furniture, equipment	Allocate designated key holders
Steward uniform / hi viz jackets / where to collect	Steward gazebo / area onsite
Walkie Talkies (if required)	Where to collect, how to use
Traffic management onsite & car parking	Procedure for traders, visitors, guests
Steward meeting point / gazebo	Confirm central point on site map
Refreshments & welfare arrangements	Confirm location of water/food/WCs
Lost property point	Confirm location / responsible steward
Weather forecast	Plans for inclement weather onsite

Health & Safety and Risk Assessment (RA)	Share agreed plans from RA
Crowd management	Arrangements for high traffic arriving/leaving the event
Disabled / mobility arrangement	Access points / special arrangements
Media - arrangements for journalists / TV	Access, names of journalists attending
Other activities at the event	Explain any additional activities during main event eg data capture, brochures, competitions, interviews, demonstrations
Consider other external events in the vicinity	Brief stewards if anything of significance is taking place nearby / possible impact on travel, parking or visitor attendance
Emergency procedures	
Fire onsite & evacuation plan	Explain procedure, meeting points
Injury onsite & provision of first aid	Explain procedure, who to contact
Lost & found children	Explain designated zone & procedure
Reporting suspicious / threatening behaviour	Contact EM or Head of Security

Venue Checklist - onsite (for Event Manager/Chief Steward/Site Manager)

ITEM	YES	NO	N/A
Fire Exits clear and open			
Fire extinguishers in place			
Gangways / corridors clear and unobstructed			
'No Smoking' signs in place			
Main house lighting working			
Emergency lighting working			
Radios/walkie talkies/mobile phones available, working, charged up			
Venue clean and tidy			
Seating arranged correctly			
All stewards arrived for duty			
Stewards briefed for venue / site			
Steward designated for disabled evacuation			
Protective clothing available as required			
Floor area clear of trip/slip hazards			
Electrical equipment safely installed (festival / live music equipment)			
Ensure MC aware of announcement requirements in an emergency			
Venue Health & Safety pack available and complete			
COMMENTS / CONCERNS (anything ticked 'NO' should be included)			

Stewards' Briefing Pack

PLEASE READ THESE NOTES AS THEY CONTAIN IMPORTANT HEALTH & SAFETY INFORMATION

Introduction

Thank you for stewarding at *The Equinox Festival / Christmas Fayre / XYZ event...*

Stewards are an integral part of the event: you are a first point of contact for visitors, a vital source of programme information and guidance, ensuring that the event runs smoothly and safely. As a steward, you are the eyes and ears of the audience. Visitors to the event will look to you to ensure that their experience is spent in a safe and pleasant environment. To help you with this responsibility, Ross-on-Wye Town Council has prepared this written briefing.

Please read this carefully in advance of the event.

General Guidance

- **Be punctual:** the Event Manager (EM) will need to brief you about your duties before the event starts at the designated time and meeting point.
- **Safety:** the safety of others may depend upon you and you must at all times behave in a responsible manner and ensure that you are fully capable of carrying out your duties. If you have any concerns or are not comfortable with your role and responsibilities, please inform the EM.
- **Difficult situations:** if you have to deal with someone who is difficult or dissatisfied, be calm, rational and patient. The Event Manager is there to support you if required and is your first point of contact should you experience any adverse situations onsite and you must report any issues or incidents back to the EM.
- **Reporting an incident:** if you are off-duty and see something untoward happening at the event, you should report it to the EM in the first instance.

Event Management

The Equinox Festival / Christmas Fayre / XYZ Event is organised by town council staff supported by a team of councillors who act as our onsite team and they in turn are supported by you. Ultimate responsibility for Health and Safety at the Festival / Fayre / XYZ Event lies with the town council staff, and is delegated through the onsite councillors and you, the stewards.

Health and Safety (H&S) Policy

The Equinox Festival / Christmas Fayre / XYZ Event has a written H&S policy which both sets out our event objectives and defines the H&S responsibilities at all levels of the event organisation. A copy of the H&S document is held at the Ross-on-Wye Town Council offices at Town Hall, Cantilupe Road, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7AN.

Risk Assessment (RA): a Risk Assessment document is created by Ross-on-Wye Town Council for each event that involves the general public. A copy of the RA is available from the town council offices at Town Hall, Cantilupe Road, Ross-on-Wye, HR9 7AN.

First Aid and Accidents: in the event of an accident or incident involving injury to anyone at any point during your shift - either a visitor or member of the stewarding team - advise the person requiring assistance to seek attention from the onsite First Aid team and then report this immediately to the Event Manager. If the person requiring assistance is unable to make their way to the onsite First Aid team, report this immediately to the Event Manager or First Aid team, who will take over and provide assistance in situ.

Lost & Found Children

A copy of the event's Lost & Found Child procedure is available with this document. Please read it and follow the procedure in the event of an incident.

Fire

- **You must** know where the fire exits / extinguishers / meeting points are at the event, and **you must** keep the fire exits clear at all times.
- The Event Manager will point out the location and type/purpose of any firefighting equipment to you. In the event of a fire, your first duty is to ensure the safety of the audience. If you discover a fire (no matter how small):
 - Raise the alarm
 - Oversee the evacuation of the venue
 - Fight the fire using appropriate equipment **ONLY** if it is safe to do so in the absence of fire crew.

Evacuation Procedure

If it is necessary to evacuate the event / venue, follow the procedure which will have been outlined to you by the Event Manager.

Radios / Walkie Talkies

Where appropriate, designated stewards will have a radio or walkie talkie, distributed by the Event Manager, Chief Steward or Head of Security.

Protective Clothing

- Where appropriate, the Event Manager may issue you with protective clothing or equipment – **please only use / wear what is provided.**
- Fluorescent / high viz jackets are issued to all stewards - they are intended to increase your visibility to traffic and – in case of emergency – to an evacuating audience.
- Rubber or disposable plastic gloves are available where litter-picking is part of the duty. Most litter collected will consist of food wrappers or drinks containers.
- Due to the nature of the event and the audience, the safe handling of and disposal of sharps (needles) or broken glass should not be an issue. However, we cannot predict when it may become a concern, so please be alert and aware when picking up litter.

Weather

- It is possible that during outdoor events, the weather may change at any point and you may be exposed to the elements while performing your duties. Please wear clothing appropriate to the weather conditions and check the forecast on the day.
- If it is sunny, consider using a sunscreen with a high protection factor.
- In any extreme weather, the Event Manager, town council staff and councillors will be expected to rotate their stewards between sunlit/shady posts or indoor/outdoor duties as far as possible.

Manual Handling

Please be aware that back injury may result from attempting to handle too heavy a load. At the event we try to reduce that risk as far as is practicable, but the following advice should be considered:

- **Feet:** ensure a wide, stable and mobile base
- **Legs:** use your legs to power the lift
- **Knees:** bend your knees before lifting
- **Back:** keep a straight back
- **Arms:** keep the load close to your body
- **Hands:** ensure that you have a secure grip on the load
- **Head:** keep your head up during the lift

Remember: *only lift or carry what you can easily manage – please get help with large or heavy objects.*

Reporting incidents and concerns

All incidents and concerns, whether resulting in injury or not, must be recorded on the event incident log, which is kept by the Event Manager. This should be done as soon as possible after the incident occurs. Immediate concerns should be raised with the Event Manager – please don't wait for an accident to happen!

Thank you once again for your support and have a happy and safe *festival / fayre / event*.

INCIDENT LOG SHEET

Event name	
Venue / location	
Date	

Please note that you should record sufficient information to enable any incidents to be investigated fully after the festival. This may include the names of those involved, witnesses and contact information eg telephone numbers and/or addresses.

Time	Nature of incident	What happened?	Action taken	Completed by (name)