

North Yorkshire County Council

Corporate and Partnerships Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Corporate Volunteer Project Update Monday 7th March 2022

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To provide Members with an update on the Corporate Volunteering Project and outline continued progress made to date.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1 An overview on the Corporate Volunteer Project was provided at the Corporate and Partnerships O&S Committee in 2019, 2020 and most recently in April 2021. Details were provided about how the Corporate Volunteer Project was approved as part of the 2020 Programme and how it aims to maximise and optimise the use of volunteers across all services, creating consistencies in: marketing, recruitment, induction, expenses, training, ongoing support and efficient volunteer processes with the purpose of optimising the use of volunteers and through positive volunteer experience aid retention.

3.0 Corporate Volunteering Project

- 3.1 Sponsored by Stronger Communities the corporate Volunteer Project is being delivered by the Resourcing Solutions Team – HR, recognising the synergies between the volunteer journey and employee journey, whilst acknowledging that there are key differences between the two. The focus for this project is to achieve the objectives presented at the mid-cycle briefing in 2019. A Volunteer Sub-Group continues to meet regularly to provide a steer for the project, discussing challenges and priorities and inputting into areas of work as they progress. This group comprises of representatives from Stronger Communities and the Resourcing Solutions Team and lead officers from the services that manage volunteers.

3.2 Impact of COVID on NYCC volunteering

Nearly all regular NYCC volunteering services halted or significantly reduced during 2020 due to the lockdowns and impact of the pandemic. Whilst volunteering mostly resumed in services in 2021 it was reduced compared to pre-pandemic. For example, the Rotters Volunteers normally attend community events to promote waste reduction and composting and most of these events were cancelled, even in to 2021.

The table shows that the number of volunteer hours completed in quarter 1 & 2* 2021 compared to the previous two years.

**Financial year quarters*

No. of registered volunteers					
Q1 April, May, June			Q2 July, August, September		
Quarter 1 2019	Quarter 1 2020	Quarter 1 2021	Quarter 2 2019	Quarter 2 2020	Quarter 2 2021
5988	5868	5224	5925	5868	4784
No. of volunteer hours					
Quarter 1 2019	Quarter 1 2020	Quarter 1 2021	Quarter 2 2019	Quarter 2 2020	Quarter 2 2021

54,150	10,087	6,712	65,357	11,117	10,884
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As the COVID restrictions reduced in 2021 and into 2022 services are starting to engage with volunteers regarding a return. Some services, particularly Libraries, have acknowledged that some volunteers feel nervous about returning to community based volunteering and have not returned in 2021 which accounts for some of the reduction in registered volunteers on Q2 2021. In addition as more schools have transferred to Academies this has reduced the number of School Governors in LA schools.

3.3 Volunteer Feedback

An online survey was issued to NYCC volunteers in November 2021, with a return date of 9th January 2022. 80 volunteers responded to the survey.

The survey aimed to understand volunteers' motivation and experience of volunteering to improve volunteering / social action opportunities in the future and thereby attract and retain volunteers.

- Overall feedback was positive, with **84%** of respondents satisfied with their volunteering role.
- The majority (51%) are volunteering as much as they did before the pandemic and a small proportion are volunteering more than they did previously (5%).
- The most common reason overall for getting involved was wanting to keep active (mentally and socially) (74%), closely followed by wanting to help their local community (73%).
- More than 90% of respondents agreed with the following and no one disagreed:
 - the expectations of what I do is reasonable
 - there is always someone I can go to for help
 - I know how to raise an issue if needed and I am well supported
- Respondents were asked if they were likely to volunteer in the future; 92% said they likely to volunteer over the next six months and 96% said they likely to volunteer over the next eighteen months.
- The majority (80%) of volunteers do not want any kind of recognition. Those that did want recognition thought that an invitation to a celebration or social event (19%) or verbal/written thanks from the service (18%) were the best form of thanks.

We intend to do some communications to share and celebrate the positivity around the satisfaction with the NYCC volunteer scheme. Whilst volunteers have strongly reported that they do not want any kind of recognition, the appreciation and positively created by thanking volunteers and showing appreciation is not to be underestimated and will continue to be important.

The survey will form a good baseline benchmark prior to LGR and has provided useful information to help us shape the way we attract new volunteers and retain them.

3.4 Online Application Form

This is the first part of the Digital Volunteer Journey (see 3.5). An online Volunteer Application form for new volunteers was trialled in Summer 2020 and is now in place for services to use when they next wish to recruit new volunteers. Prior to implementing all volunteer services were consulted and involved in the content of the application. This online form is linked to the corporate recruitment system and enables swift and efficient processing, automated correspondence to applicants and, where applicable, links to DBS checks and automated reference requests. All correspondence and related activity is

tracked through the system for each volunteer applicant which provides a cohesive approach for all services.

3.5 Digital Volunteer Journey

The aim is to develop and implement an online process for volunteers to; apply, complete the recruitment process, induction, record volunteering hours and log /claim expenses as currently these are all manual processes. Process mapping, consultation with Volunteer Coordinators and a Project Brief has been developed for this approach and is currently with Technology and Change (T&C) for development and implementation. This is one of the objectives of the project that will release the greatest efficiencies and benefits for volunteers themselves. Whilst we will progress with volunteers digital journey we know and will provision for those volunteers who prefer alternative approaches.

3.6 Volunteer Celebration events

During 2021 we worked in partnership with Community Service Organisations to organise and deliver some locally hosted Volunteer Celebration events, to thank all volunteers from all sectors (Not exclusively NYCC volunteers). Unfortunately the changing Covid restrictions mean some of these events were postponed or cancelled, however representatives from NYCC volunteers were invited to those that progressed. (See section 4.2 for future celebration events).

3.7 Sustainability

Recognising the ongoing value of volunteers the programme and support continues into the future and will help with the transition to the new council.

4.0 **Future Focus**

4.1 The key focus for the Corporate Volunteering Project over the next 12 – 18 months is Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and ensuring that volunteer services currently engaged by one of the District, Borough or the County Council are identified and brought into a consistent Volunteer approach in the new North Yorkshire Council.

To date we have identified which Councils currently engage volunteers and are currently working with their services to identify the number of volunteers and approach for recruiting, training, coordinating and supporting them.

All policies and procedures relating to volunteers will be reviewed and it will be proposed that all volunteers in the new Council are brought in line with the same Volunteer Policy to ensure the same consistent approach.

4.2 **Volunteers Week**

We will raise the profile of NYCC Volunteers during Volunteers Week 2022 to ensure our volunteers are recognised and thanked for their contributions. This is likely to include press pieces, social media and some events to get volunteers together to say thank you.

5.0 **Recommendations**

5.1 Scrutiny Members are asked to note the Volunteer Project progress.

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23 February 2022