

LONDON BOROUGH OF WALTHAM FOREST

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| Meeting / Date | Cabinet 13 January 2022 | |
| Report Title | Volunteering Strategy | |
| Cabinet Portfolio | Councillor Ahsan Khan, Portfolio Lead Member for Community Safety and Communities |  |
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| Wards affected | All | |
| Public Access | Open | |
| Appendices | Appendix 1 – Volunteering Strategy Appendix 2 – Equality analysis screening | |

1. SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek Cabinet's approval of the Volunteering Strategy, attached to this report at Appendix 1, that the council plans to publish in January 2022.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 Cabinet is recommended to:
- 2.1.1 Note the strategic direction and content outlined in the proposed Volunteering Strategy.
 - 2.1.2 Approve the Volunteering Strategy as attached at Appendix 1.
 - 2.1.3 Agree that the contents of the 12-month action plan referred to in the strategy will be determined by the Strategic Director, Corporate Development in consultation with the Portfolio Lead Member for Community Safety and Communities.

3. PROPOSALS

- 3.1 Volunteering in all its forms plays a vital role in creating thriving, connected communities in Waltham Forest. Volunteering was at the

heart of supporting our success as London's first Borough of Culture and the overwhelming community response to the pandemic.

- 3.2 Volunteering and its positive impact on volunteers, community groups and the communities they serve continues to be felt right across Waltham Forest.
- 3.3 As we look to build a better and more equal borough, having a strategic vision for volunteering will be critical to building on our collective commitment to public service.
- 3.4 This is Waltham Forest's first Volunteering Strategy and it was vital that our strategic vision for volunteering reflected the priorities of our communities. Our Volunteering Strategy has therefore been developed through a pioneering co-design process.
- 3.5 Given their importance to shaping and delivering the future of volunteering in the Borough, the strategy has been co-designed with current volunteers, the voluntary and community sector, and the wider community. Engagement included a volunteer co-design panel, workshop sessions with volunteers and the VCS, and surveys targeted at the VCS and the wider community.
- 3.6 Reflecting the full volunteering landscape in the borough, our shared vision for volunteering is: "Waltham Forest will be the best place in London to volunteer – volunteering will be inclusive to all, it will tackle shared priorities and volunteers will be supported and recognised for their valuable contributions".
- 3.7 The strategy outlines three priorities that will support delivery of this vision:
 - 3.7.1 **Our community groups are celebrated and supported with their volunteer roles** - enhance the capacity of community groups to create exciting new volunteering roles and expand their vital work in communities.
 - 3.7.2 **All volunteers have a quality experience** - provide a wide variety of high-quality opportunities that promote inclusivity and support people to achieve their ambitions through volunteering.
 - 3.7.3 **People can make the change they want in Waltham Forest** - small acts through volunteering can make huge differences. We will ensure our volunteers can contribute to change in the areas they care most about.
- 3.8 These priorities are underpinned by the key areas where action is required to deliver on them, and actions the Council will take. These will be expanded in a 12-month volunteering action plan which will be published online.
- 3.9 The Volunteering Strategy will be monitored and reviewed after 12 months. At the end of this period, we will review our progress, as well as whether our strategic priorities remain fit for purpose and reflective of the priorities of our communities.

4. OPTIONS & ALTERNATIVES CONSIDERED

- 4.1 The Volunteering Strategy recommended sets out the Council's strategic direction for volunteering reflecting the current context and insight gathered from a comprehensive co-design process.
- 4.2 The alternative option is not to publish any Volunteering Strategy at all and continue with the strategic direction outlined in the Active Communities Strategy. However, this strategy pre-dates the pandemic and other changes that have reshaped the volunteering landscape since its publication.

5. SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITY STRATEGY PRIORITIES (AND OTHER NATIONAL OR LOCAL POLICIES OR STRATEGIES)

- 5.1 The Volunteering Strategy aligns closely with other corporate priorities and strategies such as the Public Service Strategy, Fair Deal for Waltham Forest and the Council's programme of work on equality, diversity, and inclusion.

6. CONSULTATION

- 6.1 The Volunteering Strategy has been informed by a diverse range of insights gathered from residents, current volunteers, and our VCS partners.
- 6.2 The strategy incorporates recommendations from the June 2021 Scrutiny Committees' Joint Themes Review of the response to Covid-19. Recommendations relating to volunteering from this review were that:
 - 6.2.1 The Council seeks to embed and expand its network of volunteers after the pandemic, including an emphasis on supporting vulnerable residents who do not have access to formal support.
 - 6.2.2 The council works closely with its volunteer partners to explore how volunteers can gain official accreditation and support volunteers to move into paid opportunities relevant to their skillset, where appropriate.

7. RESET

- 7.1 In July 2021, the Council approved its Strategic Reset priorities and delivery programme to recover from the pandemic and build a bright future for all in Waltham Forest.
- 7.2 One of the Reset delivery areas is mission-based volunteering, and the new Volunteering Strategy articulates our vision for volunteering, the priorities that underpin this and the community missions this will support.

8. IMPLICATIONS

8.1 Finance, Value for Money and Risk

- 8.1.1 No new, direct financial implications arising from this paper. The cost will be contained within the existing communities budget.

8.2 Legal

- 8.2.1 None specifically as a result of this report.

8.3 Equalities and Diversity

- 8.3.1 An initial screening exercise of the equality impact of this decision was undertaken and is available at Appendix 2. It determined that there was no impact on the Council's equality duty. We expect the strategy will deliver positive impacts for a number of protected groups and the exact nature of these will be determined in due course.

8.4 Sustainability (including climate change, health, crime and disorder)

- 8.4.1 The Volunteering Strategy sets out our strategic vision for volunteering that includes how volunteering will support a set of "community missions". These include a clear focus on priority issues for communities including an "Act for Climate" mission which will support our goal of net zero emissions by 2030. As such, it is expected to have a positive impact on sustainability. This will continue to be assessed within the delivery plan.

8.5 Council Infrastructure

- 8.5.1 None specifically as a result of this report.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION (as defined by Local Government (Access to Information) Act 1985)

None