

# Children, Sports and Leisure Policy and Scrutiny Committee

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<b>Classification:</b>	<b>For general release</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Implementation of the Westminster Volunteering Strategy 2014-2019</b>
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<b>Cabinet Member Portfolio</b>	<b>Cabinet Member for Sports, Leisure and Open Spaces</b>
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## 1. Executive summary

This report provides an update to the Committee on the implementation of the Westminster Volunteering Strategy 2014-2019.

Following input from the Policy and Scrutiny Committee throughout 2013, on 11<sup>th</sup> March 2014 the Council launched the new Team Westminster Volunteering Strategy 2014-19. This new strategy will see the Council increase direct investment in services which facilitate and enable people to volunteer. Specifically, we are committed to renewing our volunteering brokerage offer, refreshing our events and sports volunteering programmes as well as investing in new projects such as social action volunteering, council staff volunteering in support of local good causes, and a Time Credits scheme which enables residents and workers to exchange their time for rewards.

## 2. Background, including policy context

### 2.1. Better City, Better Lives – a connected city

In March 2014 the Council published Year 2 of Better City, Better Lives - our five year plan for making the city safer, healthier, more enterprising and more connected. This set out the ambition that, everyone should feel more involved in their local community, find it easier to make connections with one another both virtually and in person, and to feel more connected to jobs, services, information and decisions affecting their community.

At the heart of Better City, Better Lives is the conviction that everyone has a role to play in the Westminster community. We believe that those who live, work or visit the city should take responsibility for making a positive contribution to the community. What this means for the council is that we want to make it easy for residents and people who work and study in the city to volunteer and support local good causes.

**2.2 Children and Community Services Policy and Scrutiny Committee’s recommendations on the draft Volunteering Strategy**

In June 2013 the Committee reviewed an early draft of the strategy and made the following recommendations. These recommendations have all been carefully considered and also identified below are the specific actions we have taken or proposed to take in response to the Committee:

Committee recommendation	Action
That the Westminster volunteering strategy should look to build on the strengths of existing programmes and learn from elsewhere.	The strategy focuses on facilitation and signposting to existing provision. Most notably, the introduction of a new online Community Web portal will allow residents’ to access a wider range of information on what services and opportunities are available locally. This will be developed and delivered in partnership with the community sector.
That the Westminster volunteering strategy should actively recognise the role of volunteering in helping people back into work but define clear boundaries to protect the unemployed from exploitation.	<p>The main priority of the strategy is to increase the level of volunteering amongst local people irrespective of employment status, ability or skill level. In addition, the Volunteering Brokerage service will continue to work with local further education institutions, JobCentre Plus and employment programmes to promote volunteering opportunities for residents to improve their skills and employability.</p> <p>The strategy clearly states that volunteering roles are only ever value added and are never a substitute for paid employment.</p>

<p>Work with all Council departments and corporate partners, to explore what provision already exists where volunteering can make the most difference.</p>	<p>By focusing on the signposting of existing provision, the Strategy builds upon the strengths of existing programmes and will introduce new schemes only where gaps currently exist or value can be added.</p> <p>Officers have established a Strategy Implementation Group involving representatives from across council services including adults, children's, worklessness, Public Health and city management to deliver this particular recommendation.</p>
<p>Ensure that the Council, as an employer and commissioner, encourages volunteering through publicising the opportunities available to those who work for the City.</p>	<p>Both as an employer and a commissioner, the Council will continue to encourage volunteering through its internal staff volunteering campaigns and by asking contractors to outline their policies on staff volunteering. This will help to maximise the social value added to the City by the Council. The Procurement Team are leading on the development of a 'responsible procurement' programme to ensure such considerations are worked through with contractors on a more consistent basis.</p>
<p>Work with a broader range of groups in relation to the development of the strategy. Members at the Committee identified faith groups, cadets, schools and school governors – as key stakeholders in the volunteering community.</p>	<p>The community web portal is being designed with a view to offering all community groups the prospect of directly interacting with volunteers in the community. Groups will be able to sign up as part of Team Westminster and receive regular information on volunteering developments and become important on-the-ground advocates for the strategy. This is being done as a direct response to feedback received from community groups and voluntary sector leaders such as those identified in developing the strategy. Functionality will be further tested with user groups.</p>
<p>Understand and explains the role of ward councillors in supporting and developing the volunteering strategy as it progresses.</p>	<p>The Strategy will sign-up a wide range of community groups as part of Team Westminster. We will also seek to identify ward councillors to act as community champions across</p>

	Westminster to lead the campaign and promote volunteering in their local areas. We expect to link this with local community engagement activity.
Should strongly consider the 'branding' of volunteering. Members highlighted that balanced marketing and promoting awareness would be key to the success of the strategy.	We have developed and introduced a strong city-wide 'Team Westminster' volunteering brand, adaptable for individual programmes, which will help to build upon our previous success and promote greater awareness of the Strategy.
Provide evidence on how volunteering provides a 'return on investment' as part of the justification for any necessary additional expenditure. This will also be crucial to evaluation the long-term success of the programme.	Public Health have recently commissioned a report looking at the social return on investment for volunteering – a copy of which is attached to this report. We will be exploring how best to implement its finding as part of the performance management process for each of the services in the Volunteering Strategy.

### **3. Delivering on the Westminster Volunteering Strategy 2014-2019**

#### **3.1 What we do already**

At present, the Council commissions four specialist programmes designed to provide a diverse range of fun and rewarding opportunities for residents, staff and workers to volunteer in Westminster.

- **Tailored volunteering opportunities**

Volunteer Centre Westminster (VCW) delivers the city-wide core volunteering brokerage service for the Council. This service enables anybody who lives, works or studies in Westminster to get involved with a wide range of volunteering opportunities ranging from administration to mentoring and charity trusteeships. The contract consistently exceeds its performance targets. Between April 2013 and April 2014 this programme helped 868 people to volunteer.

- **Events based volunteering**

VCW also run City Guides, which enables people to volunteer at high profile events by providing a mobile tourist information service to visitors. City Guides was promoted at a highly successful event held at Lord's Cricket Ground in January and has since supported Chinese New Year, the premiere of Die Hard Five, the BAFTAs and a range of smaller community events across the city. Volunteer Centre Westminster staff are working to raise the profile of City Guides with both potential

volunteers and event organisers to ensure the programme supports more events and more volunteers during 2014-15.

- **Sports volunteering**

'A City Transformed Through Sport' is a sports volunteering programme also run by VCW on behalf of the City Council. The programme supports volunteers and sports clubs to increase the levels of volunteering in sport and physical activity in Westminster. It seeks to reduce barriers to volunteering and offers subsidised sports coaching courses to help people towards employment.

- **Employee supported volunteering**

The Council currently subscribes to 'Time and Talents for Westminster'. This enables City Council staff to volunteer and participate in social action across the Borough. Time and Talents broker opportunities for staff based around skills development goals and team challenges as determined by individuals and managers. Time and Talents also work with major employers in Westminster such as Land Securities and Government Departments to support staff volunteering.

### **3.2 New services we are commissioning**

Following the launch of the new Strategy in March, the Council will be commissioning a host of new services that support volunteering in Westminster in addition to those listed above.

- **Flagship Volunteering Programme**

We will commission a 'Flagship Volunteering Programme' consisting of three distinct projects for residents to get involved with: "Team Westminster Ambassadors" (formerly City Guides), "Team Westminster Sports Volunteers" (formerly a City Transformed Through Sport) and a brand new service, "Team Westminster Community Action". Social Action volunteering will create a pool of enthusiastic local volunteers who will be able to join local events bringing communities together. These events will be planned in partnership with local communities to identify a particular local problem they want to solve together. Initial proposals include hosting events around tackling social isolation or cleaning up parks and local communities and we would welcome proposals on what events could be held.

Council officers have carried out a full service review of the existing City Guides and Sports Volunteering programme to inform the specification for the new Flagship Volunteering service. A service specification has been developed and invitations to tender are now live for bids from prospective suppliers. The new service is expected to commence in autumn 2014.

- **Time Credits**

We will develop a Westminster Time Credits programme in the south of the city to make it easy and rewarding for people to volunteer in Westminster. This allows volunteers to be rewarded with one Time Credit for every one hour they volunteer. These credits can then be exchanged for a range of exciting opportunities across Westminster, London and the UK, meaning people can learn new skills and try new experiences because of volunteering. This will compliment and work alongside existing time banking services in Westminster to encourage the use of an hour for hour concept of volunteering.

Work is ongoing to develop a the specification and the new service is expected to commence in autumn 2014.

- **Community Web Portal**

We will launch a Community Web Portal so that all information about local opportunities – formal and informal – is in one place. By integrating with the Westminster Time Credits scheme and existing web platforms, this portal will allow community groups and individuals to have an online account which logs interests, flags relevant opportunities and provides a marketplace for people to look for, earn and spend time credits. It will also allow people to share their experiences and help to build community spirit in Westminster.

Council officers are developing proposals for the Community Web Portal. Early discussions are underway with potential developers and it is expected that the Portal will be operational in autumn 2014 to align with the commencement of new contracts for direct delivery noted above.

- **Welcome pack for new residents including information on how to volunteer**

We will provide residents moving to Westminster with ideas and information about how to get involved in their local community and the volunteering services we provide. The population of Westminster can fluctuate by 30% each year so when people move into the city, we want to make it easy for them to get involved right from day one. This will be support by information in Council Tax letters sent to all registered residents in the city.

**If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers please contact:**

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