

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS COMMITTEE

31 MAY 2022

CLIMATE RESPONSE VOLUNTEERING

Report from: Samantha Beck-Farley, Chief Organisational Culture Officer
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Summary

To advise the Committee of the introduction of Climate Response Volunteering for employees.

1. Background

- 1.1 Corporate Management Team have agreed to allow employees one day paid leave of absence per year to undertake volunteering in the community on climate response activities.
- 1.2 Climate response volunteering activity will act as evidence to support the delivery of the Medway Council Climate Change Action Plan.
- 1.3 Climate Response Volunteering will form part of the special leave provisions.

2. Options

- 2.1 Supporting employee volunteering can have a number of positive outcomes for the Council - in addition to supporting the Council's climate response agenda. Organisations who offer volunteering days or schemes report a reduction in sick leave as employees want to work for an organisation that values them and gives back. They feel more satisfied and motivated, leading to higher morale and improved performance.

3. Advice and analysis

- 3.1 In agreeing to this new provision, there are a number of principles and criteria that must be met before any proposed voluntary activity takes place. Namely the activity must:
 - be purposeful and positively impact on addressing our climate response;
 - deliver clear and tangible benefits for the Medway Council Climate Response programme and align with the Council's Climate Change Action Plan;

- be managed within the service at the total discretion of the Service Manager with the proviso that the needs of the service must always take precedence before any volunteering activity takes place;
- be one of the agreed activities held on the Climate Response Team's approved list of activities (attached as appendix one);
- be approved by the Climate Response Team who will keep a record to support action plan delivery;
- be promoted regularly and widely internally across the Council
- allow provision for those with disabilities to take part in the volunteering activity, where appropriate;
- wherever possible be undertaken in teams or small groups (depending on service delivery requirements) to support team development - however there will be opportunities for those not working in teams to take part.

3.2 Guidance has been produced outlining the above principles, the criteria and the process for authorisation (attached as appendix two).

3.3 The Climate Response Team will monitor the number of placements and types of activity undertaken. This will be done through the authorisation process via an electronic form on Service Desk and the MYview leave booking system. The number and type of activities undertaken will be reported as part of quarterly progress updates against the Climate Change Action Plan. The outcomes of the placements will be monitored to ensure they continue to support the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan. A feedback mechanism (from both staff and any organisations involved) will be introduced to determine how successful the placements are. This will enable the Climate Response Team to ensure the placements are fit for purpose and enable continual improvement.

4. Risk management

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
Impact on service delivery	Time off in groups for volunteering activity may have a detrimental effect on service delivery	Line manager must seek Service Manager's final approval before any volunteering activity takes place. At this point the needs of the service will be considered and decisions made accordingly. Mitigation is: - teams to split into smaller groups on different days and/or set up a rota and/or - individuals take the time off in periods of half a	

Risk	Description	Action to avoid or mitigate risk	Risk rating
		day – this will not only support service delivery but will fit in better with the time duration needed for certain activities	
Inappropriate activity undertaken.	Volunteering activity not appropriate to support climate response.	All volunteering activity must be agreed in advance by the Climate Response Team using the relevant form on Service Desk.	
Those with disabilities may feel marginalised.	Employees with disabilities may be excluded from some activities due to accessibility issues.	The line manager, when determining the activity, must take into account the specific needs of all the team.	
Negative public perception	Public response to employee 'time off' may be negative.	Promotion and awareness raising must positively explain how all activity supports our climate change response, the environment and is of benefit to the community.	

5. Consultation

- 5.1 The guidance has been shared with the Medway Makers and the equality forums. It has also been shared with the Rainham ecohub who have confirmed the guidance and form are workable in relation to external organisations, and they are in support of the scheme.

6. Climate change implications

- 6.1 The Climate Change Volunteering Day supports the Council's Climate Response Action Plan.

7. Financial implications

- 7.1 There is always potentially a cost in terms of productivity when staff are awarded an extra day's leave, however as long as line managers make decisions, cognisant of the requirements of the service and given the likely numbers involved, this impact is expected to be negligible.

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 It is the manager's responsibility to be satisfied that the employee has considered and accepted any risks associated with the proposed volunteering activity - the Council will not be liable for damages or injuries that occur whilst volunteering.
- 8.2 It is the employee's responsibility to ensure that any host organisation has its own Public Liability Insurance in place as required. The host organisation is responsible for ensuring any required safeguarding checks are processed and in place prior to the start of the volunteering activity.

9. Recommendation

- 9.1 That the Committee note the contents of the report.

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Appendices

Appendix one - list of approved climate response activities and how they support the Climate Response Action Plan

Appendix two - Climate Response Volunteering Day – guidance document

Background papers

None