

Draft Guidance for Climate Response Volunteering Day (CRVD)

1.0 Introduction

In support of the council's climate response agenda, Medway Council employees will be granted, subject to certain criteria being met, one additional paid leave of absence per year to undertake voluntary work in the community relating to our climate response.

This guidance provides information for managers and employees on the principles, criteria, and authorisation process.

2.0 Scope

Climate Response Volunteering leave will be available to all Medway Council employees. Time off will be one working day (pro-rata to hours worked) per leave year (normally April-March).

2.1 Climate response volunteering activity will be categorised as paid special leave of absence.

3.0 Principles:

3.1 Time off must 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 precedent before any volunteering activity takes place.

3.2 Any proposed volunteering activity must meet the definition of appropriate activity as set out in para. 4.0 below and stand by the following principles. The activity must:

1. be purposeful and positively impact on addressing climate change
2. deliver clear and tangible benefits that support the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan
3. be one of the agreed activities held on the Climate Response Team's approved list of activities (see para. 4.0))
4. be fed into the Climate Response Team who will keep a record to support action plan delivery
5. be promoted regularly and widely internally across the council
6. wherever possible, be undertaken in teams to assist team development
7. allow provision for those with disabilities to take part in the volunteering activity, where appropriate.

4.0 What constitutes appropriate activity

4.1 All proposed activity will need to be authorised as appropriate by the Climate Response Team. A list of agreed activities can be found here.

4.2 All requests must be confirmed as appropriate using the Climate Response Volunteering Day submission form located on service desk.

4.3 Details of any proposed activity that is not included in the list should be outlined in the submission form clearly stating how the activity supports the delivery of the Climate Change Action Plan and/or contributes to tackling climate change. The Climate Response Team will then advise whether it is an agreed activity.

4.4 If any proposed activity is with an external organisation, the name of the organisation and details of the proposed activity will also need to be clarified on the form.

4.5 Reasonable requests for Climate Response Volunteering leave that meet the criteria will be approved. However, the request could be declined if:

- there are health and safety concerns
- the criteria are not met clearly eg no apparent alignment to the Climate Change Action Plan
- there are concerns of the impact of delivery of team or service objectives

4.6 Note: Some external organisations on the list may not always have volunteering opportunities available. When contacting to enquire, employees are asked to be aware of this and respect the organisation's response. Employees would need to try later or look for an alternative activity.

5.0 Authorisation process for time off

5.1 All time off must be authorised in advance of any activity taking place.

5.2 Once the Climate Response Team have confirmed the activity is appropriate to the manager, all team members who will be undertaking the activity must book the day as special leave on MyView. The manager should authorise in advance of the activity date.

4.5 The final authorisation for absence must be made by the Service Manager, or delegated officer if appropriate.

5.0 Expenses

5.1 The council will not reimburse any expenses incurred for volunteering activity.

6.0 Legal considerations

6.1 Employees are trusted to use this time for its purpose, any suspected instances of misuse will be investigated in accordance with the council's disciplinary procedures.

6.2 As representatives of the council employee actions will directly reflect on the organisation. As a result, all employees must act in line with the Employee Code of Conduct whilst using Climate Response Volunteering Leave. Any concerns with an employee's conduct whilst volunteering will be investigated in line with the disciplinary procedures.

6.3 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.

6.4 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.