Meriden Parish Council

Volunteer Policy

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Introduction

Meriden Parish Council acknowledges that volunteers can contribute in many ways to the Council's activities, giving their time, skills and experience in an unpaid capacity which also benefits the local community and the volunteers themselves. This policy applies to volunteers working on behalf of the Parish Council, not those employed by the Council or members of the council. The Council may need to create a volunteer database that records volunteers and some basic contact details; GDPR policies will apply to the storing and retention of data.

Meriden Parish Council seeks to involve volunteers to:

i. ensure our services meet the needs of our clients
ii. provide new skills and perspectives
iii. increase our contact with the local community we serve.

Principles and Values

The Volunteer Policy is underpinned by the following principles:

i. Meriden Parish Council will ensure that volunteers are properly integrated into the organisational structure and that mechanisms are in place for them to contribute to the work of the Parish Council
ii. Meriden Parish Council will not introduce volunteers to replace paid staff; volunteers will complement the work and extend the services of the Council
iii. Meriden Parish Council expects that staff at all levels will work positively with volunteers
iv. Meriden Parish Council recognises that volunteers require satisfying work and personal development and will seek to help volunteers meet these needs, as well as providing the training for them to do their work effectively
v. Meriden Parish Council is proud of our commitment to equal opportunities and seeks to create a diverse and inclusive working environment for staff and volunteers.

Preparing for Volunteers

Before involving volunteers in any role, Meriden Parish Council will ensure that the following are in place to ensure their safety and efficiency:

i. all volunteers will be provided with a written role description that explains the role purpose and main duties/responsibilities
ii. all volunteers will be provided with any training required for the role
iii. a risk assessment will be undertaken for the volunteer activity
iv. Meriden Parish Council will ensure that volunteers have access to the necessary equipment to carry out their duties/tasks, including personal protection equipment (PPE) if appropriate
v. the Volunteer Lead is responsible for the management of volunteers. She/he will ensure that volunteers are properly inducted into Meriden Parish Council and have access to this policy and other relevant policies and handbooks.

Insurance

Meriden Parish Council's liability insurance covers the activities of volunteers and liability towards them, on condition that the volunteer is working at the sole request and under the sole control of the Council. To this end, every activity that is carried out by the volunteer requires approval prior to the activity taking place.

The Parish Council does not insure a volunteer's personal possessions against loss or damage. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform their motor insurance company that they are using
their car in the act of volunteering.

Volunteers will carry out only the least hazardous work and contractors will be used by the Parish Council for technical and heavy labour, along with hazardous activities. Prior to work commencing, a visual inspection of the site must be carried out to ensure that there are no obvious hazards such as residue from fly-tipping, glass or sharp items. Responsibility for undertaking the inspection rests with the supervisor/ Volunteer Lead. These inspections are to be recorded. Where volunteers wish to use their own equipment and tools, Meriden Parish Council, will not be held liable for injury caused by use of a volunteer's faulty equipment/tools or loss of equipment/tools.

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteers

Meriden Parish Council will create clear role descriptions for each volunteer opportunity. These will be available to ensure that potential volunteers, staff and the organisation as a whole are clear on the purpose of the role, this will also provide a basis for support and supervision as it outlines the volunteers tasks and responsibilities.

Meriden Parish Council will ensure that all volunteer opportunities are promoted widely to increase accessibility of a diverse range of interested parties. Our recruitment will include but not be limited to online promotions and will be a fair and open procedure, promoting equality of opportunity. For example: - Meriden Parish Council will only list the skills and requirements on a role description that are necessary for that role. Meriden Parish Council will make reasonable adjustments to accommodate volunteers, for example allowing a support worker to accompany a volunteer.

Meriden Parish Council, when recruiting volunteers, will provide a short application form that asks for personal contact information, why the volunteer is interested in the role and how they meet the skills criteria. All volunteers identified as having the required skills (from an application form) will be invited to an informal interview. Meriden Parish Council will carry out criminal records checks on successful volunteer applicants for any role that it deems necessary, for example working with children and young people, vulnerable adults or sensitive data.

Managing Volunteers

Meriden Parish Council is committed to the ongoing support of volunteers to ensure that they are able to carry out their role, the following elements are essential to the management of volunteers:

i. all volunteers will receive an induction and any ongoing training necessary
ii. volunteers will receive a signed agreement of hours, responsibilities and tasks and location of the volunteering activities
iii. access to all relevant policies and procedures, such as health and safety, safeguarding, fire procedure, expenses, etc, will be provided
iv. day to day support, if required, from the Volunteer Lead or relevant identified person. This could include daily task sheets or shadowing opportunities. Meriden Parish Council recognises that volunteers have different preferences and availability and are open to support sessions being an informal process agreed upon between the Volunteer Lead and the individual volunteer. Meriden Parish Council requires volunteers to have a minimum of a 20 minute informal discussion every six weeks to discuss their work, any concerns volunteers may have and any performance concerns the Volunteer Lead may have; a record of these meetings, including actions and outcomes, will be held by Meriden Parish Council
v. Meriden Parish Council will keep an accurate file of each volunteer. Files will include the volunteers personal contact information, their application form, role description, signed agreement, record of their interview, training attended, record of all support meetings and any grievances or complaints. This file will be treated in accordance with the Data Protection Act (2018)
vi. Meriden Parish Council recognises the valuable contribution volunteers make and will, with the volunteer's permission, promote their contribution to the community
vii. Meriden Parish Council understands that volunteers move on for a number of reasons, such as another opportunity, because of a grievance or because we have identified they are not suitable to our role. Meriden Parish Council will arrange a support meeting with the volunteer to establish the reasons for leaving, whether any additional training can be provided, and an exit interview will be carried out; volunteers will be provided with a reference.

Expectations of Volunteers

Meriden Parish Council expects volunteers to:

i. be reliable and honest
ii. respect confidentiality
iii. comply with council policies and procedures
iv. carry out their volunteering tasks as agreed and in a way that reflects the Council's values and not bring it into disrepute
v. not publicly express personal views on Parish Council matters that are contradictory to the Council's aims and objectives.

Policies and Procedures

Meriden Parish Council recognises that volunteers are a part of the team and should be protected and bound by Meriden Parish Council's policies and procedures that are designed to keep all interested parties safe and ensure work is carried out to a high and consistent standard. A number of policies are in place to protect staff and volunteers and these can be viewed on the Council's website at www.meridenparishcouncil.gov.uk, or alternatively a copy can be obtained from the Parish Clerk.

Expenses

Meriden Parish Council will reimburse volunteers for travel expenses from home to the place of volunteering. Volunteers can claim reasonable out of pocket expenses, subject to the production of receipts as evidence of the expenditure, and completion of an expenses claim form. Volunteers are reminded that training, equipment, materials and supplies will be provided by the Parish Council for the volunteer to carry out their role.