Parish Council

Volunteer Policy

Document	Volunteer Policy
Document owner	Operations Manager
Version	V2.0
Issue date	November 2026
Review date	October 2027, or within 12 months of adoption
Review	Annually, and sooner after a significant incident, material change or relevant legislative / guidance change
Applies to	Council officers, supervisors and volunteers undertaking Council-authorised activities.
Approval	Revises the policy adopted November 2024. Effective on Council approval

Change log

Version / date	Updates	Whom
V2.0 / Oct 2026	Format aligned; owner, version, review and approval controls updated.	AB
V2.0 / Oct 2026	Role boundaries, induction, supervision, safety and expenses clarified.	AB
V2.0 / Oct 2026	DBS eligibility, safeguarding, fair assessment and data handling updated.	AB
V2.0 / Oct 2026	Complaints and leaving arrangements clarified; role and risk forms revised.	AB

1. Introduction

1.1 Central Swindon North Parish Council (CSNPC) values the involvement of volunteers. Volunteers help reflect the interests, needs and resources of the community we serve. We recognise volunteers as part of the team, with a distinctive and complementary role alongside paid staff.

1.2 The Council benefits from volunteers' willingness, enthusiasm, skills and experience. Volunteers should benefit from the experience in return. We are committed to managing volunteering so that it is worthwhile, safe and supportive for both the Council and the individual.

1.3 The Council is committed to fair treatment and accessible volunteering opportunities. We will discuss adjustments to tasks, equipment, communication and supervision so that people from different backgrounds and with different needs can participate.

1.4 This policy applies to volunteering arranged and authorised by CSNPC, including grounds and community projects, libraries, community centres and Moredon Sporting Hub. Independent charities, clubs and community groups remain responsible for their own volunteers unless responsibilities are agreed in writing with the Council.

2. Preparation and planning

2.1 Volunteer roles must complement paid services. Volunteers must not replace paid posts, provide cover for staffing vacancies or absence, or take responsibility for duties reserved to employees. They may assist staff with agreed activities within their role description.

2.2 Each volunteer will receive a role description stating the purpose, location, agreed tasks and limits of the role; the supervisor and cover contact; anticipated days or availability; and the training and support provided. Appendix A gives an example. Role descriptions must be reviewed annually and whenever activities change.

2.3 Volunteering is freely undertaken. The volunteer agreement records mutual expectations and is not intended to create an employment contract or an obligation to provide or accept work. Volunteers can decline tasks or end the arrangement. Managers must ensure that day-to-day arrangements reflect this voluntary basis.

2.4 The Operations Manager must confirm that the Council's insurance covers the proposed volunteer activities and any relevant conditions before they begin. The supervisor will explain the cover and any restrictions; the Council must not give an unqualified assurance that every activity or loss is insured.

2.5 Volunteers are not expected to use personal vehicles for Council activities. Any exceptional proposal must be approved beforehand by the Operations Manager, with appropriate licence, vehicle and insurance checks. Travelling to the volunteering location is separate from driving on Council business.

2.6 The Council will reimburse reasonable public transport costs against a valid ticket or receipt. Other necessary out-of-pocket expenses will be considered individually and should be agreed before they are incurred. Reimbursement covers actual costs and is not payment for time volunteered.

2.7 The Council will provide appropriate facilities, equipment, protective clothing and training without charge. The Operations Manager oversees volunteer involvement and this policy. Each service manager must appoint a supervisor and cover contact. Supervisors provide support, arrange training and process expense claims through the Council's usual approval arrangements.

3. Volunteer recruitment

3.1 The Council wishes to see all parts of the community represented among its volunteers. Opportunities will be widely promoted and recruitment information made available in accessible formats wherever practicable. Applicants will be invited to discuss their interests, skills, availability and support needs.

3.2 Recruitment will be proportionate to the role. It will normally involve a registration form, an informal discussion and appropriate references. The Council will explain the activities and expectations so that both parties can decide whether the opportunity is suitable. Unsuccessful applicants may request feedback and discuss other opportunities.

3.3 Personal information collected during recruitment will be handled in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, as amended. Applicants must receive the relevant privacy information. Only information needed for the role and recruitment decision should be collected.

DBS checks and suitability

3.4 The supervisor must establish the appropriate checks with the Operations Manager before recruitment. Standard and Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks may only be requested where the actual duties are legally eligible. Barred-list checks must only be sought where permitted or required. A volunteer role or contact with the public does not, by itself, justify an Enhanced check.

3.5 Required checks must be completed before the volunteer undertakes the duties to which they relate. A person must not undertake regulated activity from which they are barred. Any interim activity must be separately approved and must not expose people to the risk the outstanding check is intended to address.

3.6 The Council will consider applicants fairly and will not automatically exclude someone because of a criminal record. It will ask for and consider only information it is legally entitled to use, respecting spent convictions and filtering rules. It must not seek protected information indirectly through a self-declaration or risk assessment.

3.7 Where relevant information needs individual consideration, the Operations Manager will arrange a confidential discussion and use Appendix B. The assessment must consider relevance to the role, the applicant’s account, time elapsed, changes in circumstances and practical safeguards. It must record a reasoned decision without assuming that a disclosure means the person poses a risk.

Younger volunteers and safeguarding

3.8 Participation by anyone under 18 requires management approval of age-appropriate tasks, suitable supervision and safeguarding arrangements. Agree parental or carer consent where appropriate to age and circumstances, emergency contacts and any necessary restrictions. DBS checks cannot be requested for someone under 16. Check any other age-related legal or insurance restrictions before starting.

3.9 Safeguarding arrangements must reflect the actual role, including contact with children or adults at risk. The supervisor must identify the safeguarding contact, reporting route and boundaries before a volunteer starts. Recruitment checks support safe practice but do not replace supervision or reporting concerns.

4. Management of volunteers

4.1 Volunteers will receive a welcome and induction before starting. This must explain the role, supervision, safe working, welfare facilities, first aid, emergency evacuation, incident reporting, confidentiality, data protection and safeguarding. Record completion and any further training needed.

4.2 Each volunteer will receive a handbook or role pack containing a welcome and thanks, their role description, Council responsibilities, relevant safety and safeguarding instructions, confidentiality and data protection information, a volunteer agreement, and supervisor and emergency contacts. Volunteers may ask questions before agreeing to begin.

4.3 Agree a settling-in period suited to the role and anticipated attendance. The supervisor will provide additional support during this period and hold a review at its end. Agree the frequency and format of ongoing supervision with the volunteer and review it when needs or tasks change.

4.4 The supervisor provides day-to-day support. Volunteers should contact the named cover officer if the supervisor is unavailable, with unresolved matters referred to the Operations Manager. Emergency services must be called directly where needed; volunteers must not delay urgent action while trying to contact a manager.

4.5 Volunteers may attend relevant in-house training with their supervisor's approval. The Council will communicate by telephone, email or another agreed accessible method, respecting the volunteer's contact preferences.

Safe activities and equipment

4.6 The supervisor must include volunteers in activity risk assessments and explain the controls before work begins. Consider the task, individual capabilities, manual handling, tools, weather, hygiene, public interaction and emergency arrangements. Check equipment and provide suitable protective clothing. Volunteers may stop any activity they believe is unsafe and contact the supervisor.

4.7 Powered machinery, work at height, electrical work, hazardous substances and other higher-risk tasks must not be undertaken without specific management approval, an appropriate risk assessment, demonstrated competence, suitable supervision and confirmed insurance cover. Lone volunteering requires a separate assessment, authorisation and agreed contact arrangements.

4.8 Volunteers must leave needles, suspicious substances, suspected asbestos and other hazardous waste undisturbed and report them. They must not confront people involved in antisocial behaviour. Withdraw to safety and seek staff or emergency assistance as appropriate.

Conduct and reporting concerns

4.9 Volunteers must treat others respectfully, follow agreed safety instructions, protect Council property and information, and stay within their role. Harassment, discrimination and abusive behaviour are unacceptable. Volunteers must declare relevant conflicts and must not speak publicly for the Council or take or publish photographs of service users without authorisation.

4.10 Report accidents, near misses and damage promptly to the supervisor. Report safeguarding concerns immediately through the named safeguarding route; concerns about that contact should go to the Clerk or an appropriate alternative safeguarding lead. Call 999 if anyone is in immediate danger. Volunteers must not investigate allegations or promise secrecy. Council officers will arrange any necessary investigation, statutory reporting or safeguarding referral, including a DBS referral where the legal duty arises.

5. Complaints and ending an arrangement

5.1 Minor concerns by or about volunteers should normally be discussed with the supervisor through usual support and supervision. Concerns about the supervisor may be raised with the Operations Manager; concerns about that manager may be raised with the Clerk.

5.2 Serious or unresolved complaints will be handled under the Council's Complaints Procedure. Safeguarding concerns and suspected criminal offences must be referred through the appropriate procedures and to relevant agencies where required. An urgent referral must not wait for a complaint to be completed.

5.3 Where necessary to protect people, property or information, the Council may pause activities or restrict access while a concern is considered. The volunteer should be told the concern and given an opportunity to respond where appropriate, without prejudicing safeguarding or police enquiries. Record the decision and reasons. A pause is a precaution and does not establish wrongdoing.

5.4 The Council may end an arrangement where the role is no longer available, it is unsuitable, or concerns cannot be resolved safely. Explain the decision and the route for review by an officer not involved in the original decision, or through the Council's complaints arrangements.

5.5 Volunteers may leave at any time. Advance notice is appreciated so that arrangements can be adjusted. The supervisor must arrange the return of keys, equipment and records, remove access permissions and offer an opportunity for feedback. Confidentiality continues after volunteering ends.

6. Volunteer feedback

6.1 The Council recognises volunteers' contribution and welcomes their views. Feedback will be sought through regular discussions and an annual volunteer survey. Volunteers may approach their supervisor or another Council officer at any time with suggestions or concerns.

6.2 The Operations Manager will consider feedback when reviewing roles, support and this policy, and explain relevant improvements to volunteers. Volunteers should be able to raise concerns in good faith without being treated unfairly.

7. Volunteer information and policy review

7.1 The Council will maintain secure volunteer records containing necessary contact and emergency details, role and supervision arrangements, induction and training, expenses, and relevant discussions or decisions. Information must be accurate, proportionate and accessible only to staff who need it.

7.2 The privacy notice must explain why information is held, the lawful basis, retention and individual rights, including how to request access or correction. Health and criminal-record information require additional legal safeguards. The Council must identify the applicable processing conditions before collection; a general consent declaration is not a substitute.

7.3 DBS certificate information must be used only for its authorised purpose, held securely and retained no longer than necessary. Do not routinely copy certificates or reproduce their contents in general volunteer files. Retain only the limited check and decision record that is justified, and securely delete detailed information when no longer needed. Apply the DBS Code of Practice and the Council's retention arrangements.

7.4 The Operations Manager will review this policy annually and sooner after significant incidents, changes to activities or relevant legal or guidance changes. Material amendments require approval through the Council's governance arrangements. Read this policy alongside the Council's health and safety, safeguarding, equality, data protection and complaints arrangements.

Appendix A Grounds maintenance volunteer role

Example role description — complete the local details before use.

About the role

This role is for someone who enjoys being outdoors, gardening and helping to keep Council community spaces welcoming and tidy. Volunteers support agreed projects alongside staff; they do not replace routine contracted services or paid posts.

Agreed activities

- Planting, watering and light weeding in agreed areas.
- Litter picking using suitable equipment, following a site briefing.
- Helping with minor decorative improvements, including painting where separately assessed.
- Moving light materials and equipment within assessed manual handling limits.
- Reporting defects or concerns to the supervisor and keeping simple activity records where needed.

Role boundaries

Tasks must be agreed with the supervisor and matched to the volunteer's capabilities and training. Do not undertake structural repairs, electrical work, powered machinery use, work at height or hazardous waste handling under this example role. Any proposed extension requires a revised role description and approval under section 4.7. Do not work alone unless separately assessed and authorised. Do not intervene in antisocial behaviour.

Skills support and expenses

An interest in gardening or practical tasks, willingness to follow safety instructions and consideration for other site users are welcomed. Relevant experience is helpful but not essential for all tasks. Training, suitable tools and protective equipment will be provided, together with supervision and opportunities for feedback.

The role offers the opportunity to meet others and contribute to local community spaces. Reasonable public transport costs are reimbursed against tickets or receipts. Other expenses require prior agreement. Modest refreshments during volunteer sessions may be arranged through the supervisor; any café arrangements must be confirmed locally and must not be offered as payment or reward for hours worked.

Local arrangements	Complete before starting
Site and agreed tasks	
Supervisor and cover contact	Grounds Maintenance or Allotment Officer, or nominated officer:
Availability	Times to suit the volunteer within agreed supervised hours:
Training and adjustments	
Settling-in review date	
Volunteer and supervisor acknowledgement	Names and date:

Appendix B Suitability assessment and management plan

Confidential — restricted access

Use where information obtained lawfully requires an individual assessment before confirming a role or continuing duties. This form supports a fair suitability decision; it does not replace the activity health and safety risk assessment. Do not use labels such as “blemished disclosure” or assume that every applicant presents a risk.

Assessment details
Volunteer name and proposed role

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Site, assessor name and assessment date

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Lawful source of information and any DBS check level and eligibility

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Before recording information, confirm the Council is entitled to consider it. Exclude protected or filtered records and spent convictions where the role does not permit their consideration. Record only necessary facts; do not attach or transcribe the DBS certificate as a matter of routine.

Relevant responsibilities and access
Identify whether the role involves children or adults at risk, money, valuable property, sensitive information or other relevant responsibilities. Describe the actual access and supervision rather than assuming that contact alone creates a risk.

Relevant duties and access

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Discussion with the volunteer
Explain the concern and invite the volunteer’s account. Consider the accuracy and relevance of the information, time elapsed, age and circumstances at the time, any relevant pattern, rehabilitation and changes in circumstances. Discuss practical safeguards and alternative activities. Avoid unnecessary personal or medical questions and assumptions based on demeanour or an expectation to express remorse.

Relevant facts and the volunteer’s explanation or corrections

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Further information or clarification needed and who will obtain it

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Continue on a secure additional sheet if necessary. Do not record information the Council is not legally entitled to use.

Appendix B Management plan and decision

Volunteer name and role

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Record an identifiable role-related risk only where supported by the information. Where no material risk is identified, record that finding and the reasons. Do not invent a risk to complete the form. Safeguards must be proportionate and practicable.

Risk and who may be affected	Safeguards and responsible officer	Action date and review

Residual risk and whether it is acceptable for this role

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Decision: approve / approve with safeguards / defer pending information / decline

Reasons for the decision and any alternative role or tasks considered

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Operations Manager approval and date

_____

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Volunteer comments or acknowledgement and date

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Acknowledgement records that the assessment has been discussed; it does not mean agreement with every finding or provide the sole legal basis for handling sensitive information. If the volunteer does not sign, record how the decision was communicated.

Review date and responsible officer

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Review at the agreed date, normally within six months where active safeguards are required, and sooner if duties, relevant circumstances or risks change. Explain the outcome and review route