
Report To: Planning & Environment

Date: 14th July 2025

Contact Officer: Paula Harrison, Clerk

Subject: Volunteer Agreements

1. Background/Purpose

- 1.1 Prior to the inception of the Parish Council, Swindon Borough Council commonly issued either a license or an agreement for any voluntary work on public land. These documents would detail the location, boundary and the scope of the voluntary work.
- 1.2 The Parish Council has not continued this approach as it is not the landowner and cannot issue a license . As a result, any regular work on public open space by volunteers has been agreed through a shared understanding, and, activity confined to only that which the Parish Council may reasonably do.
- 1.3 The Council has shown support and appreciation for volunteering through the volunteer reward grant/clean and green fund. Whilst these funds are no longer operational, volunteers can apply for expenditure up to £250 through the existing grants policy to support their projects.
- 1.4 From time to time, there have been misunderstandings between volunteers and the Parish team. Issues that have arisen have included planting outside of the original area of focus, accidental mowing, differences of opinion on boundary size, complaints from members of the public who disagree with the volunteer project, ongoing maintenance and location. A written agreement may be helpful to ensure there is clarity and agreement between both parties. Groups that would be eligible for an agreement would be Shaw Ridge FAB for the meadow area, Edgehill Haven/Toothill Park, Peatmoor Woodland for the public open space areas, Greendown Copse for the public open space areas. Woodland areas are out of scope as these are not managed by the Parish Council.

2. Purpose of an Agreement

2.1 *1. Clarity of Roles and Responsibilities*

A volunteer agreement sets out clear expectations on the scope of tasks, working areas, and responsibilities, ensuring that volunteers understand their role and that the Parish Council can ensure that activities are safe and appropriate.

2. Health & Safety Compliance

By having a formal agreement in place, we can better ensure that volunteers are aware of relevant risk assessments, safety procedures, and how to report hazards—reducing the risk of injury and liability.

3. Protection for Volunteers and the Council

The agreement provides a mutual understanding of safeguarding, supervision, and insurance arrangements. It clarifies what is and isn't covered under Parish Council insurance.

4. Coordination with Parish Staff and Contractors

Volunteer activity can be planned in harmony with the work schedules of grounds staff or contractors, avoiding duplication, conflicts, or inadvertent disruption of routine operations.

5. Encouraging Responsible Stewardship

An agreement reinforces that volunteers are acting in the interests of the wider community and have a shared responsibility for respectful, inclusive, actions and ensuring that public spaces remain accessible.

6. Record Keeping and Recognition

Volunteer agreements help the Parish maintain records of contributions for reporting, funding bids, and recognition—showing how the Parish supports and values local involvement.

7. Supporting Sustainability and Consistency

With a framework in place, commitments to volunteers will be more sustainable and not reliant on the awareness and approval of individual members of staff.

8. Legal and Policy Alignment

The agreement can incorporate data protection, safeguarding, and insurance obligations, ensuring that all parties operate in line with the Council's requirements.

9. Managing Tools, Equipment and Access

It ensures appropriate arrangements for the use or storage of tools, PPE, and public access, helping to avoid misuse or confusion over responsibilities.

10. Building Positive Relationships

A formal agreement promotes transparency and mutual respect between the Council and the volunteers, laying a foundation for long-term collaboration and trust. A more formal approach should improve consistency and accountability.

3. Financial and Budget Considerations

- 3.1 There are no direct financial or budget considerations. Improving communication and information sharing should increase compliance with the relevant risk assessments and safe systems of working and should reduce risk.

4. Recommendations

- 4.1 That the Committee agrees to adopt a Volunteer Agreement approach to volunteer groups working in public open spaces as set out in this report.

West Swindon Parish Council

DRAFT Volunteer Agreement

This agreement sets out the understanding between **West Swindon Parish Council** and GROUP NAME. It is not a legally binding contract but outlines mutual expectations to ensure safe, coordinated, and positive volunteering on public open space.

1. Volunteer Group Details

Name: _____

Location of activity: (what.3.words) Boundary map attached as an appendix.

When do you meet?

Frequency of activity?

Lead contact for the group details

Name & Address: _____

Contact Number: _____

Email: _____

2. Scope of Volunteer Work

GROUP NAME agrees to contribute to the care and improvement of public open spaces within West Swindon Parish, volunteer activities may include:

- Litter picking
- Planting or weeding
- Light maintenance (e.g. clearing overgrowth, sign cleaning,)
- Supporting events or community clean-up days

Tasks must be with the use of hand tools only and in line with the relevant safe system of working.

3. Responsibilities of the Volunteers

- Work safely and responsibly at all times.
- Use only agreed tools or equipment.
- Wear appropriate clothing and PPE.
- Follow any risk assessments or safety guidance provided.
- Notify the Parish Council of any hazards, injuries, or incidents.

- Respect other users of public spaces and act in a considerate, inclusive way.

4. Responsibilities of the Parish Council

- Provide appropriate guidance, safety information, and task briefing.
- Ensure volunteers are covered by insurance (where applicable and agreed).
- Supply tools or PPE as agreed in advance.
- Offer support and act as point of contact.
- Keep volunteers informed of relevant updates, events or changes.
- Any changes to the public open space required by a Council change in policy, local improvement or necessitated by maintenance obligations that will adversely affect the work of the volunteers will be communicated in advance to the group (unless there is a safety imperative that makes advance notice unfeasible). Where possible, a minimum of four weeks notice will be given.

5. Insurance and Supervision

Volunteers engaged in agreed activities under this arrangement are covered by the Parish Council's public liability insurance. This does not extend to activities not pre-approved or undertaken alone without notice. Volunteers under 18 must be accompanied and supervised by a responsible adult.

6. Confidentiality and Conduct

Volunteers may become aware of information related to the Parish Council's work or residents. All such information should be treated as confidential.

Volunteers are expected to act respectfully, avoid discrimination or harassment, and represent the Parish in a positive manner.

7. Agreement Duration

This agreement remains valid unless withdrawn by either party. It may be reviewed at Either the volunteer or the Parish Council can end this arrangement at any time with notice.

Signatures

On behalf of Group Name

Volunteer Signature: _____ **Date:** _____

Parish Council Representative: _____ **Date:** _____