

Meeting of:	<b>Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee</b>
Date of Meeting:	<b>Monday, 15 March 2021</b>
Relevant Scrutiny Committee:	Homes and Safe Communities
Report Title:	<b>Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer</b>
Purpose of Report:	To examine how a Welsh Government funded, Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer can improve levels of digital engagement and volunteering
Report Owner:	Miles Punter - Director of Environment and Housing
Responsible Officer:	Farida Aslam, Senior Neighbourhoods Manager
Elected Member and Officer Consultation:	Legal – Committee Reports Finance This report will affect all Council tenants and therefore no individual ward member consultation has been undertaken.
Policy Framework:	This report is within the Policy Framework and Budget.
<p>Executive Summary:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This report sets out the rationale for the expansion of support and assistance for volunteering in the Vale of Glamorgan. Specifically, to address inequality, social isolation and loneliness. The proposal has been adapted to reflect the challenges posed by Covid-19 and sets out how a digital approach can assist vulnerable people who may be left isolated or experiencing poor mental health or loneliness as a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic.</li> <li>• It is proposed to use Welsh Government funding from the Early Years Prevention Fund to support the employment of a dedicated individual to develop a bespoke project on behalf of the Public Service Board (PSB).</li> </ul>	

## **Recommendation**

1. That Scrutiny Committee (Homes and Safe Communities) examine how the new post can improve levels of digital engagement and volunteering in the Vale of Glamorgan.

## **Reason for Recommendation**

1. To ensure the existing volunteering project continues to make a positive impact on people and communities in the Vale of Glamorgan and Welsh Government funding is used to further develop the existing scheme to work with new partners and benefit more residents by developing more engagement via digital means.

## **1. Background**

- 1.1 The original Vale Timebanking volunteering project was approved by Cabinet on 23rd October 2017 (Minute C115 refers). It is an innovative approach to increase volunteering amongst Council tenants to increase the confidence, self-esteem and skills of participants and at a community level, promote better community spirit and create more successful/ resilient communities.
- 1.2 To take the initiative forward, a partnership was formed with a Social Enterprise called Tempo. Tempo specialise in Timebanking and have a proven track record of working with local authorities, housing associations and public sector organisations across the United Kingdom. This enabled the Council to adopt a well-developed system which included an established currency of time credits, a network of outlets where time credits could be redeemed and a means of tracking and monitoring the use of time credits.
- 1.3 Progress updates have previously been provided to the Homes and Safe Communities Scrutiny Committee in June 2018, December 2018 and September 2019.
- 1.4 In light of the successes of the existing Timebanking scheme for Council housing tenants, there have been discussions with the Public Service Board (PSB) regarding scope to extend the project across different partners and reach out to more citizens. The PSB partners recognised the potential benefits of Timebanking, particularly around reducing inequalities, improving health and addressing loneliness and isolation.
- 1.5 Funding was previously secured (Early Years Prevention Fund) to support the extension of the successful Timebanking scheme across the Vale of Glamorgan, specifically to assist non-Council Housing tenants to take part in Volunteering. Volunteering has been found to be an effective way of engaging people in meaningful activities and has resulted in several positive benefits to the

individual, including: increased confidence, new skills, raised self-esteem and also to communities, in terms of better community spirit, cleaner neighbourhoods (as a result of clean ups/ litter picks) and the creation of places where neighbours look out for each other. Timebanking has proved effective in encouraging individuals who were least likely to take up traditional volunteering opportunities or those who faced additional barriers and needed support to take part. Research has shown the individuals in poverty are least likely to take up volunteering whilst they are also the people likely to benefit the most.

- 1.6** Prior to the Covid-19 Pandemic, a proposal had been developed to create a new Timebanking Development Officer to work alongside the existing Community Investment and Involvement Officer within the Council Housing team, to develop volunteering opportunities for non-Council tenants in specific parts of the Vale (which were amongst the most socially and economically deprived) - to create more volunteering opportunities and encourage more residents to take up volunteering.
- 1.7** The post Covid-19 world and the continued social distancing rules mean that a traditional Timebanking model is no longer appropriate at this time, but the needs in terms of addressing underlying issues like loneliness/ isolation remain high. Consequently, the project has been adapted/ developed to make it effective in the current environment.
- 1.8** Recognising the world is now a different place, a 'digital' approach will be more important, so Volunteering is likely to be online or over the telephone. The existing volunteering scheme will need to be adapted to make it accessible to residents online and a package of support and assistance is needed to enable this to happen.
- 1.9** There is also a need to make communities better connected, so vulnerable people are not left isolated and able to access important services and supplies they need. The Vale Heroes scheme, developed as part of the emergency measures needed to deal with Covid-19, has been very effective and supported a range of new and existing volunteer led groups to provide much needed assistance to many vulnerable households. The intention therefore is to support this work and build on the energy and commitment shown by individuals and groups when communities mobilised and supported each other. Although the vaccine roll out continues at pace, shielding requirements remain in place so there is scope to continue with some of the existing support structures to strengthen community spirit and support more vulnerable neighbours.
- 1.10** Cabinet has approved the hosting of the Digital Engagement and Volunteering post within the Housing team in order to work alongside existing Community Investment staff, but it is necessary for the Scrutiny Committee to examine how this scheme will work best and achieve the best results.

## **2. Key Issues for Consideration**

- 2.1** In terms of future priorities, there is an intention to refocus the project to promote health and well-being, specifically to address health inequalities in the Vale and assist in tackling the pressure on social care services. Research indicates there are significant health benefits to individuals and communities from volunteering. Individuals report they benefit from increased confidence self-esteem, new skills as well as improved physical and mental health, whilst community benefits include, improved community spirit, greater tolerance, reduction in conflict and understanding of the needs of more vulnerable neighbours.
- 2.2** The Covid-19 pandemic has significantly changed the world. The restrictions on peoples' ability to go out and meet with other people has left significant numbers of households isolated for extended periods of time and appears to have resulted in an increase in mental health concerns. The impacts may also be being felt by disadvantaged households. In light of the 'new normal' the focus for this project is expanding the opportunities for people to volunteer using digital means e.g. providing befriending support to others via video calls, helping others get access to essential supplies online or organising online social activities like quizzes etc
- 2.3** There will be scope for the new Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer to work with staff in the Housing team to build on current successes and develop partnerships with different agencies, so residents across the Vale (not solely Council housing tenants) can participate in the project and share the benefits volunteering brings.
- 2.4** In terms of specific aims over the next 12 months, there is an intention to build on successes of social prescribing work being undertaken in some primary health settings in Barry. Working closely with existing 'Well-being coaches' in Primary Care settings, the aim would be to ensure that patients have access to a wide range of 'well-being' services. This would entail supporting and developing existing organisations with volunteers and also helping to establish new volunteer led organisations to assist with general well-being, social impact issues and active lifestyles i.e. eating well and exercising more.
- 2.5** Another key priority is to support social care services, specifically through the development of opportunities for more 'social' activities via individual's care plans. Currently there are pressures on carers and a shortage in some parts of the Vale, which mean that essential caring tasks have to be prioritised. Delivering 'social' activities via volunteers and volunteer led organisations will help via a wide range of well-being opportunities from socialising, befriending, assistance with shopping etc.

### **3. How do proposals evidence the Five Ways of Working and contribute to our Well-being Objectives?**

#### Long term

- 3.1** The approach being taken to the volunteering project maximises the chances of the project continuing to be viable in the long term and ensures that Council tenants and members of the public can continue to take advantage of volunteering opportunities which improve their quality of life.

#### Prevention

- 3.2** The approach to volunteering and engagement helps to improve individual's well-being, enabling them to be more confident, develop better self-esteem and feel more valued. This can lead to health benefits and also has acted as a springboard to some individuals who have gone on to access training or employment. Volunteering has also improved community spirit and led to some people taking a more active role in their communities- this helps ensure that Council estates are great places to live.

#### Integration

- 3.3** Whilst Timebanking has been developed within the Housing team, there are benefits to expanding the project and working with partners in order to deliver a more integrated service to citizens in the Vale of Glamorgan. The report refers to some specific proposals which take account of this need.

#### Collaboration

- 3.4** The key to success of the Timebanking volunteer project so far has been the partnership approach taken. The staff team have worked closely with a wide range of partners who have been able to encourage people to volunteer and also offer volunteering opportunities. This has increased the number of people who have taken part and provided a varied range of opportunities, including environmental works, befriending, community events etc. A collaborative approach is also being taken to working with Public Service Board partners to look at options for expanding the scheme in future.

#### Involvement

- 3.5** Tenants have been involved in Timebanking from the beginning. Prior to introducing the project, consultation was carried out with individual tenants and soundings taken from tenant groups and this shaped the approach taken. Close links have been formed with the individuals involved and staff continue to provide support, encouragement and assistance to help people derive the maximum benefit from volunteering.

## **4. Resources and Legal Considerations**

### **Financial**

- 4.1** The volunteering project for Council housing tenants will continue to be supported by the Housing team, via a specialist Community Investment Officer and the costs for Housing tenants will continue to be met from the existing budget within the Housing Revenue Account.
- 4.2** The proposed expansion of the project would be supported via Welsh Government funding of £45,000 secured by colleagues in Public Health. This funding would cover the cost of employing a dedicated Officer to develop volunteering across tenures in the Vale of Glamorgan as well as associated costs including equipment, hosting, recruitment and materials. There would be no additional costs incurred by the Council arising from the expansion of the scheme.
- 4.3** The funding is available to spend from the current financial year, so the intention would be to draw down the monies in advance to pay for the recruitment of the new role. Thereafter, the funding will continue to be available to support ongoing work for the financial year 2021/22.

### **Employment**

- 4.4** The intention is for the Welsh Government funded post to be hosted by the Council and located within the Housing team. The Post would be located within the Community Investment team and would be line managed by the Senior Neighbourhood Manager who takes the lead on Community Investment. The post holder would be a fixed term contract offered as a secondment to staff across partner organisations of the Public Service Board and Regional Partnership Board.
- 4.5** The draft Job Description and Person Specification is attached as Appendix A. The role will be benchmarked in accordance with the Council's Job Evaluation Framework but has provisionally been set as a grade 7 salary.

### **Legal (Including Equalities)**

- 4.6** The project is designed to ensure that a wider pool of tenants and residents have an opportunity to get involved in volunteering. This includes specific projects which have been developed to involve young people, vulnerable people and person's whose health restricts their day to day activities.
- 4.7** When the funding expires it will be necessary to follow the statutory redundancy process to bring the employment to an end, however because it is anticipated the role will be filled by way of a secondment from the Council or partner agencies, any risk or exposure to employment related claims will be minimised.

## **5. Background Papers**

None.



## THE VALE OF GLAMORGAN COUNCIL

### JOB DESCRIPTION

<b>DESIGNATION/POST TITLE</b>	:	Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer
<b>POST NUMBER</b>	:	TBC
<b>DEPARTMENT/DIRECTORATE</b>	:	Environment and Housing
<b>DIVISION/SECTION</b>	:	Housing
<b>LOCATION</b>	:	Alps Depot and any other location around the Vale as necessary
<b>POST GRADE</b>	:	7
<b>RESPONSIBLE TO</b>	:	Senior Neighbourhood Manager
<b>RESPONSIBLE FOR</b>	:	N/A
<b>LIAISON</b>	:	Public Services Board partners, voluntary sector organisations and members of the public
<b>MAJOR PURPOSE OF POST</b>	:	To expand Timebanking across the Vale of Glamorgan; supporting and developing a range of voluntary sector groups to provide volunteer opportunities for members of the public.

### MAIN DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

*The job description refers to the principal duties and responsibilities of the Post. It does not necessarily list in detail all the tasks required to carry out these duties and responsibilities.*

- Promote volunteering to members of the public and increase the number of people volunteering in the Vale of Glamorgan, specifically focusing on digital methods of engagement.

Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer

- Work in partnership with third sector organisations to provide opportunities for local people to participate in volunteering.
- To organise and facilitate volunteering sessions, workshops and network meetings online to raise awareness of Timebanking; working in partnership with the Tempo and the Timebanking lead from the Council's Housing team.
- Be responsible for all aspects of volunteering in the identified area, including the coordination, recruitment, induction, support and training of volunteers, adhering to the Local Authority's volunteering policy.
- Support and monitor the impact of volunteering.
- Be responsible for matching the skills and availability of volunteers to roles available.
- To plan, prepare and deliver Timebanking presentations to organisations, community groups, forums, network groups and businesses to raise awareness of Timebanking and the benefits of volunteering.
- Ensure that volunteers are signposted to appropriate volunteer organisations/ groups so that they can volunteer in a safe, controlled manner.
- Provide support and assistance to volunteers to ensure they get the best outcomes from volunteering both face to face and online.
- Support existing volunteer led and third sector organisations to provide health and well being support services to residents
- Support residents to develop new volunteer led organisations to provide social and support activities to local people.
- Work closely with partner organisations to match individuals with volunteer led organisations so they receive assistance with a range of 'social' and 'well-being' activities.
- To use the Tempo software database to manage, evaluate and monitor the impact of Timebanking in the Vale of Glamorgan.
- To maintain accurate records and provide regular progress reports to funders and the Public Services Board.
- Ensure performance targets, where agreed are achieved and maintained.
- Assist with the preparation of performance reports as required.
- Ensure confidentiality of all information relating to residents.
- Provide the highest quality services incorporating best standards of practice, and work to continually improve standards, promoting the Department to its tenants, clients and those seeking assistance.

Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer

- Contribute to and play an active part in the overall work of the communities.
- Ensure compliance with the Council's Financial Regulations, Standing Orders, Policies and Procedures
- To implement the principles of the Council's Equal Opportunity Policy whilst carrying out the above duties
- To adhere to Health and Safety legislation / relevant Council policies and procedures and to take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and other persons who may be adversely affected by your acts / omissions.
- To implement the principles of the Council's Environment Policy while carrying out the above duties.
- Such other duties and responsibilities commensurate with the grade and in accordance with the general character of the job as may reasonably be required by the Chief Officer from time to time.

**SIGNED:**  
(Director/Chief Officer)

**DATED:**

**SIGNED:**  
(Postholder)

**DATED:**

## Person Specification

Post No		Designation:	Digital Engagement and Volunteering Officer	Department:	Environment and Housing
Section:	Housing	Completed By:	Nick Jones	Date:	24.07.2020

The Person Specification outlines the main attributes needed to adequately perform the post specified. In drawing together the specification, a critical examination of the job description has been undertaken to pinpoint those elements of the post deemed as essential.

The Person Specification is intended to give prospective candidates a better understanding of the post requirements. It will be used as part of the recruitment process in identifying and shortlisting candidates. You should refer and address each point of the Person Specification, giving evidence of what skills, experience and knowledge you have in each of these areas. Always be specific. Do not use general phrases such as “I have the necessary skills...” or “I am confident I can do the job well...”. The shortlisting panel will need to know how you meet the requirements based on the evidence you provide.

		Essential	Desirable	Ascertained by
1.	Experience	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Experience of engaging with service users and members of the public using digital methods</li> <li>• Experience of managing community consultation events.</li> <li>• Experience in working collaboratively with a range of organisations.</li> <li>• Have experience of managing and motivating volunteers</li> <li>• Have experience of working with statutory and voluntary agencies</li> <li>• Have experience of managing the learning and development of others on line</li> </ul>	<p>Experience of working with grant funding including the monitoring of outcomes and completion of returns to funders.</p> <p>Experience of developing performance management information.</p> <p>Experience of managing budgets.</p>	Application form Interview

		<b>Essential</b>	<b>Desirable</b>	<b>Ascertained by</b>
2.	<b>Knowledge</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Knowledge of current good practice and policies associated with digital inclusion, resident engagement and volunteering.</li> <li>• Have an understanding of the ethos of volunteering.</li> </ul>		Application Form Interview
3.	<b>Skills and aptitudes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Commitment to customer focused service delivery.</li> <li>• Commitment to volunteering and resident engagement.</li> <li>• Tact and diplomacy.</li> <li>• Good interpersonal skills.</li> <li>• Ability to cope with pressure.</li> <li>• Good numeracy skills.</li> <li>• Ability to prioritise.</li> <li>• Good organisational skills.</li> <li>• Good IT and digital skills.</li> <li>• Excellent communication skills both written and verbal.</li> <li>• Good team working skills.</li> <li>• Ability to network effectively and work collaboratively to ensure community investment opportunities are maximised.</li> <li>• Ability to work outside of core hours.</li> <li>• Commitment to undertake further training.</li> </ul>	Negotiation skills. Able to influence and persuade. Experience of organising events or supporting event organisation. Experience of analysing data in written and numerical format. Experience of presenting information in a variety of formats, sometimes to large groups of people. Experience of delivering training and facilitating discussions. Experience of setting up and supporting community projects.	Application Form Interview
4.	<b>Qualifications and training</b>		Qualification in resident engagement or community development.	Application Form
5.	<b>Attitude and motivation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A 'can do' attitude, with a desire to achieve positive outcomes in the communities in which the post holder would work.</li> <li>• Self-motivated requiring limited direction</li> </ul>		Application Form Interview
6.	<b>Other (please specify)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ability to drive/travel throughout the Vale or between locations as appropriate.</li> </ul>		Application Form

