

Volunteers Policy

Adopted:	26th February 2026
Next Review:	February 2027

1. Purpose

This policy sets out how Collingham Parish Council (the Council) recruits, supports and manages volunteers, and how volunteers are expected to work safely and appropriately while carrying out activities on behalf of the Council.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all volunteers working with or for the Council, including one-off volunteering activities and ongoing volunteer roles. Volunteers are not employees and do not have a contract of employment.

3. Principles

The Council's approach to volunteering is based on the following principles:

- Volunteering is optional and unpaid (expenses may be reimbursed in line with this policy).
- Volunteers will be treated with respect, supported, and provided with relevant information to carry out their role.
- Activities will be planned and managed to protect the health, safety and welfare of volunteers and others.
- The Council is committed to equality of opportunity and will consider reasonable adjustments where practicable.
- Volunteers are expected to behave responsibly and follow the Council's policies and instructions.

4. Roles and responsibilities

Clear roles help ensure activities are safe and well-run:

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- Council (as a body): approves this policy, provides appropriate resources, and ensures suitable insurance is in place.
- Clerk: maintains the volunteer register, ensures relevant documents are provided, coordinates inductions, keeps records (training, risk assessments where applicable), and is the day-to-day contact for volunteer administration.
- Volunteer Lead/Supervisor (where appointed): plans tasks, provides on-the-day briefing and supervision, ensures checks and controls are followed, and reports incidents/near misses to the Clerk.
- Volunteers: follow briefings and instructions, use equipment safely, report hazards/incidents promptly, and stop work if unsafe.

5. Recruitment and registration

Where appropriate, volunteers will be asked to complete a short registration form to support safety, insurance and communications (e.g., emergency contact, relevant experience, any adjustments required). The Council will maintain a volunteer register.

For some roles (e.g., where volunteers work regularly with children or vulnerable adults), additional checks may be required, which may include references and a DBS check. Any safeguarding requirements will be explained before a volunteer starts in such a role.

6. Induction, training and support

Volunteers will receive an induction appropriate to the role. This may include: an outline of the task/role, boundaries, relevant policies, how to raise concerns, and health and safety information.

Training will be provided where needed to carry out tasks safely. Training may include:

- Tool and equipment safety (including PPE requirements).
- Manual handling.
- Working near roads or the public.
- Use of chemicals (if applicable) and COSHH information.
- Safeguarding awareness (where applicable).

7. Health and safety

The Council will take reasonable steps to protect the health and safety of volunteers and others affected by volunteer activities. Volunteers must take reasonable care for their own safety and that of others and must follow instructions and safe systems of work.

General requirements:

- Volunteers must wear suitable clothing and footwear for the task and conditions. Long hair should be tied back and loose clothing/jewellery avoided where it could be caught in equipment.
- PPE will be provided by the Council where required for Council-approved tasks.
- Volunteers should not purchase PPE for reimbursement unless agreed in advance.
- Any volunteer may stop work if they believe it is unsafe and must report the concern to the Supervisor/Clerk.

8. Risk assessment and task planning

The Council will ensure risks are assessed and managed appropriately. For planned activities, the Clerk/Supervisor will ensure a suitable risk assessment is in place (which may be task-specific or covered by a general activity risk assessment).

Before starting any task, volunteers should complete a brief visual check of the work area and equipment and report hazards such as:

- Broken glass, needles or other sharps.
- Unsafe ground conditions, hidden holes, unstable banks, or steep slopes.
- Dog fouling or hazardous waste.
- Proximity to moving vehicles, water, or construction works.
- Damaged or unsafe tools/equipment.

9. Permitted, restricted and prohibited activities

Volunteer activities must be agreed in advance and must be appropriate to the volunteer's experience, training and supervision available.

The following categories are intended as guidance; the Clerk/Supervisor may impose additional restrictions based on risk assessment.

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9.1 Permitted (low-risk) activities (subject to briefing)

- Litter picking (with appropriate equipment).
- Hand weeding, planting, watering, light pruning with hand tools.
- Sweeping and light cleaning of Council areas.
- Painting/varnishing small items where safe and ventilated.
- Assisting at community events (non-safeguarding roles).

9.2 Restricted activities (only with authorisation, appropriate training/PPE, and supervision as required)

- Use of powered garden equipment such as lawnmowers, strimmers/brushcutters (only where the volunteer is authorised and competent).
- Working near roads or vehicle movements (may require hi-vis, signage, minimum numbers and specific briefing).
- Working at height (e.g., step ladders) for minor tasks, subject to strict controls.
- Use of chemicals (e.g., herbicides/cleaning chemicals) only where specifically authorised and with COSHH information provided.
- Minor repairs/maintenance using hand tools, where assessed as low risk.

9.3 Prohibited activities (not to be undertaken by volunteers)

- Chainsaw work, major tree work or work on trees above head height (must be carried out by qualified contractors).
- Electrical work.
- Work in live traffic environments requiring traffic management plans.
- Confined spaces, excavations, or work involving significant structural risk.
- Any task the Council/Supervisor considers unsuitable for volunteers due to risk or required competence.

10. Tools and equipment

The Council will provide appropriate tools and equipment for agreed tasks wherever possible. Tools must be used only for their intended purpose and in accordance with any training or instructions.

Use of personal tools/equipment:

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- Volunteers should not use personal powered tools for Council tasks unless agreed in advance by the Clerk/Supervisor.
- Where personal tools are agreed, they must be suitable for the task, in safe condition, and used in accordance with safe working practices.
- Any defective or unsafe tool must not be used and must be reported immediately.

11. Lone working

Volunteers should not normally work alone on Council tasks unless this has been risk-assessed and agreed in advance. Where lone working is approved, appropriate controls will be used (e.g., check-in arrangements, clear task boundaries, avoiding higher-risk activities).

12. Safeguarding

Where volunteer roles involve contact with children or vulnerable adults, safeguarding arrangements will apply. Volunteers in such roles may be required to complete safeguarding training and, where appropriate, undergo DBS checks. Any safeguarding concerns must be reported immediately to the Clerk.

13. Insurance

The Council will maintain appropriate insurance for volunteer activities where volunteers are acting under the Council's direction for approved tasks. Insurance does not remove the need for safe working practices. Volunteers must not undertake tasks that are outside the scope of this policy or any agreed risk assessment, as these may not be covered.

14. Expenses

Volunteers may claim reasonable out-of-pocket expenses that are necessarily incurred in the course of Council-approved volunteering, provided the expense has been agreed in advance (or falls within any delegated approval limit). Expenses rules:

- Claims must be supported by receipts or other evidence (electronic copies are acceptable).

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- Mileage may be reimbursed at a rate set by the Council (or HMRC advisory rate where adopted by the Council).
- Volunteers should not purchase tools, PPE, equipment, or materials for reimbursement unless agreed in advance.
- Expenses will be paid via the Council's normal payment process.

15. Conduct, equality and complaints

Volunteers are expected to behave respectfully and appropriately. Bullying, harassment, discrimination or unsafe behaviour will not be tolerated. Concerns should be raised with the Clerk in the first instance.

The Council is committed to equality of opportunity. Volunteers should tell the Clerk if they need any reasonable adjustments to support their volunteering.

16. Data protection and confidentiality

The Council will process volunteer personal data in line with its Data Protection Policy. Volunteer information will be used for administration, safety, insurance and communications and will be kept only as long as necessary.

Volunteers may learn information about individuals or Council business during their volunteering. Volunteers must treat such information as confidential and must not share it inappropriately.

17. Leaving volunteering

Volunteers may stop volunteering at any time. The Council may also bring a volunteer role to an end if appropriate, for example where there are safety, conduct, capability, or organisational reasons.

18. Review

This policy will be reviewed at least annually and after any significant incident, change to Council activities, or update to relevant guidance.