

# SCC Responses To Questions Put By Your Branch To Full Council On 20 July 2011

## Question 1

SCC says it has completed specifying tasks for volunteers to carry out in both retained and community libraries and a training programme for this. We would like clarification that this is the document issued on the 25<sup>th</sup> May.

## Response

The roles are described on the Libraries Intranet at <http://enterprise.somerset.gov.uk/ssintranet/Libraries/Operations/Volunteers/default.asp>. The information provided there is supplemented by the document for staff dated 25 May which states (p. 2) that other frontline roles for volunteers are 'possible' and that 'these [roles] include IT support, shelving, assistance with displays, and promotional activities.'

## Question 2

How will SCC ensure that volunteers are genuine and that the lines between voluntary work and employment rights are not blurred?

## Response

In retained libraries, volunteers are appointed after an interview and are issued with a Volunteer Handbook, including a Volunteer Agreement – this is available on the Intranet (as above)

In community libraries, volunteers will be appointed by the community groups themselves, but will receive training specified by the SCC Community Engagement Officer and largely delivered by the paid member of staff.

Advice will be given to managers to ensure that volunteers are given appropriate duties.

## Question 3

Will there be a comprehensive written volunteer policy?

## Response

The Libraries Service already has such a policy (pages 3–13 of the Volunteer Handbook).

#### **Question 4**

Volunteers are not free – this is a common misconception. SCC needs to think carefully about the costs of developing and maintaining a volunteer programme. How will the appropriate infrastructure to provide recruitment, support and training be established and managed?

#### **Response**

We recognise that the use of volunteers brings other costs with it, such as those relating to administration and management. We plan to make a two-year appointment of a Community Engagement Officer. One of the main responsibilities of this post will be to 'provide advice and information to community-supported libraries in Somerset on volunteer roles and the skills, experience and training required to fulfil those roles. [The postholder] arranges for training to be provided, having identified the appropriate trainer. This will include initial induction and then further training which may include members of staff in Libraries.'

#### **Question 5**

Has SCC considered their legal duties towards volunteers? These include ensuring Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks, completion of risk assessments and ensuring sufficient levels of insurance cover. Furthermore, SCC may also be liable under equality legislation for the actions of volunteers if they unlawfully discriminate against a service user.

#### **Response**

We have detailed the requirement for CRB clearance checks in the draft Agreement with community groups and have recommended processes for them to follow in order to facilitate those checks. CRB checks of volunteers in retained libraries are undertaken as for established staff.

Existing risk assessments for libraries due to be managed by community groups will be handed over to those groups; risk assessments are in place for volunteers in retained libraries. Volunteers in retained libraries are covered by existing insurance. The draft Agreement with community groups places insurance obligations on them.

#### **Question 6**

Does SCC have any plans to use volunteers to undertake the work of paid library staff during industrial disputes?

#### **Response**

There are no such plans.