



LEE VALLEY REGIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

21 NOVEMBER 2024 AT 13:00

Agenda Item No:

5

Report No:

S/71/24

REVIEW OF VOLUNTEERING UPDATE

Presented by the Head of Human Resources

SUMMARY

At its meeting on 23 November 2023 the Scrutiny Committee agreed that the focus of its next Scrutiny Review would be Volunteering (Paper S/65/23). At the Executive Committee meeting on 14 December 2023 a review of volunteering on a phased basis was noted (Paper E/832/23). An update on phase 1 and 2 of this review were provided to the Scrutiny Committee early this year (Papers S/67/24 and S/68/24). This report aims to update the Scrutiny Committee on phase 3 of this review.

RECOMMENDATION

Members Note: (1) the update on phase 3 of the review of volunteering.

BACKGROUND

- 1 In November 2023 a review of Volunteering was agreed as the focus of the next scrutiny review (Paper S/65/23).
- 2 The scope of the volunteering review was noted at the Executive Committee in December 2023 (Paper E/832/23).
- 3 Due to limited capacity in the Volunteers Team a phased approach was agreed.
- 4 The scope sets out 4 phases which will be reviewed between December 2023 and February 2025.
- 5 In February 2024 Scrutiny Committee received an update on the first phase of the review of volunteering (Paper S/67/24).
- 6 In June 2024 Scrutiny Committee received an update on the second phase of the review of volunteering (Paper S/68/24).

PHASE 3 OF REVIEW

- 7 Phase 3 set out the following areas to review:
 - Evaluate the cost and health benefits generated for volunteers within the

Lee Valley Regional Park.

- Assess the potential for additional roles and opportunities to expand.
- Future proofing the volunteer programme and reaching a wider diverse participant.

PHASE 3 UPDATE

8 Evaluate the cost and health benefits generated for volunteers within the Lee Valley Regional Park

To gain a better understanding of volunteer experiences, a survey was emailed out to all the 300 active volunteers on our mailing list. Several questions were asked to assess health and wellbeing. To estimate cost, questions were asked about which county volunteers lived in versus which they volunteered in to see if this was a barrier and whether they had any negative feelings towards our programme. Most questions were based on those used in national surveys published by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO). A question was also included relating to the type of feedback that volunteers would like to receive from the Authority as this was one of the areas that was highlighted in our Improving Practice Plan for our Investing in Volunteers reassessment.

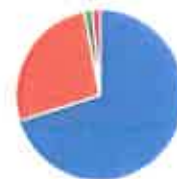
Volunteers had the option to skip any questions they wished. 69 volunteers took part in the survey with around 60 completing most of the questions.

The results

69% of the 68 volunteers who answered the first survey question (see image below) felt that they were "very satisfied" with volunteering for the Authority, 28% were "somewhat satisfied", 1% were "neither satisfied nor dissatisfied", 1% were somewhat dissatisfied and none were "very dissatisfied".

1. How satisfied are you with volunteering at LVRPA?

Very satisfied	47
Somewhat satisfied	18
Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied	1
Somewhat dissatisfied	1
Very dissatisfied	0



19% of volunteers who answered question 2 of the survey were interested in receiving feedback on their volunteering from the Authority. Here is a summary of suggestions from volunteers on the kind of feedback they would like to receive on answering question 3:

- more information on the difference / impact they make;
- how they can help more;
- how their volunteering has benefited the location in terms of flora, fauna, invasive species, water flow, etc;
- email feedback;
- speedier responses to questions;
- confirmation that they are doing a good job or constructive comments / guidance on how to improve;
- two-way conversations with staff on how volunteering is going – how others view how the volunteer is doing vs how the volunteer feels their

- experience is going;
- what standard are they at;
- a scoring system with points out of 10.

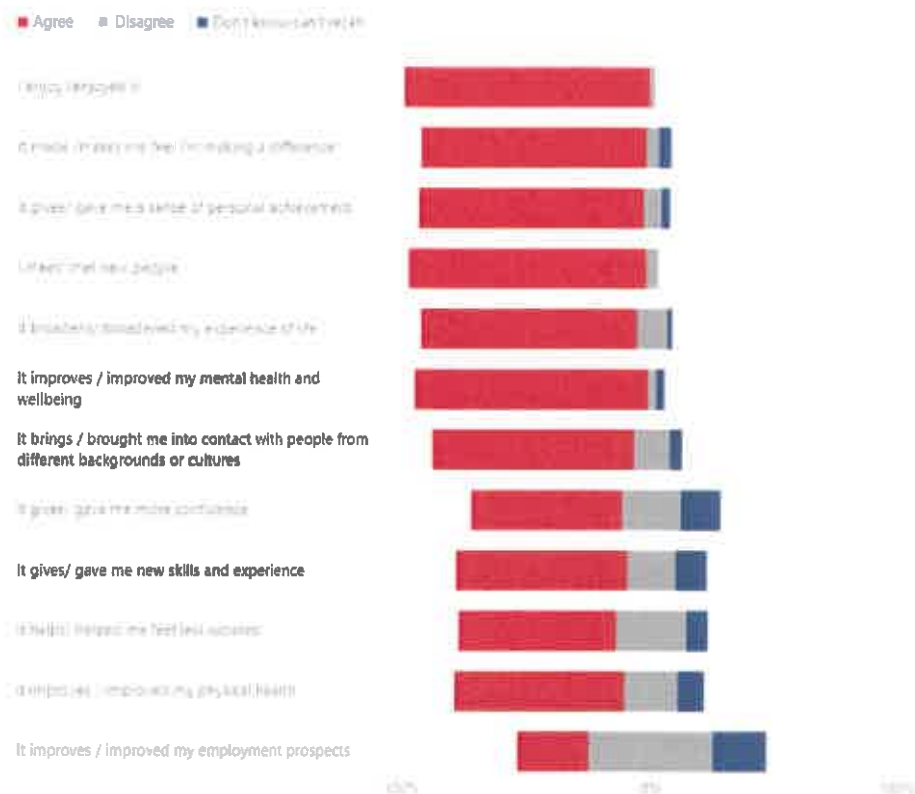
93% of the 69 volunteers who answered question 4 (see image below) felt that volunteering with the Authority has had a positive effect on their wellbeing. 6% were unsure and 1% said no.

4. Do you feel that volunteering with LVRPA has had a positive effect on your wellbeing?



At question 5 volunteers were then given the option to continue and answer 11 more questions or finish the survey there. Around 60 volunteers out of 68 completed the rest of the survey.

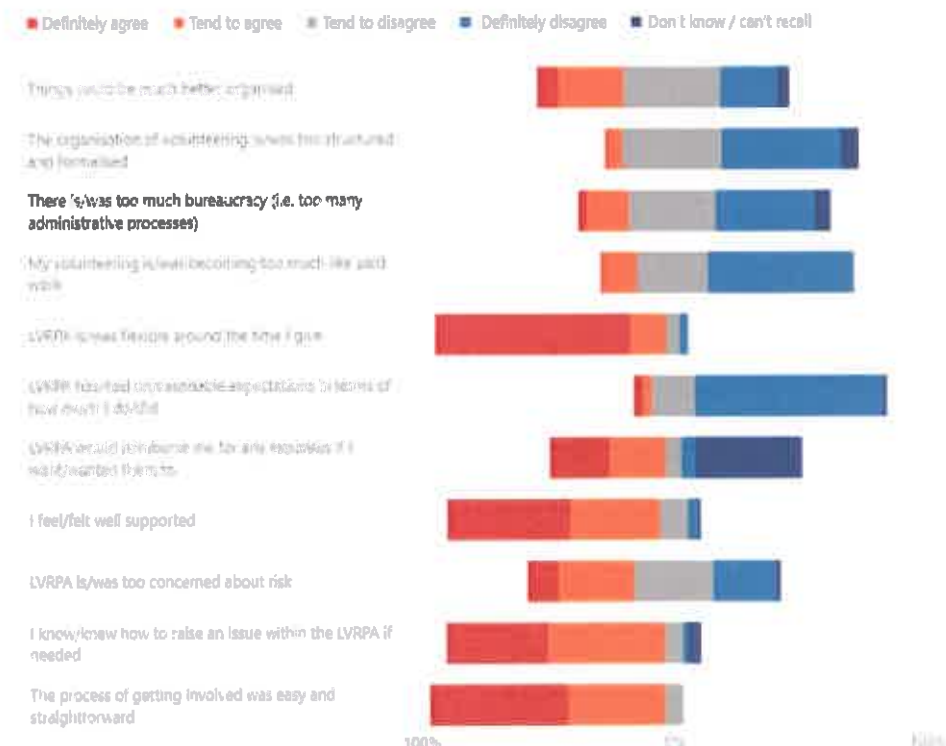
Volunteers were asked to read the statements below and choose an option from "agree", "disagree" or "don't know / can't recall" based on their experience of volunteering with the Authority.



The majority of volunteers who answered this question responded positively to these statements. One area that could potentially need some attention is that volunteering has not improved their employment prospects. However, this may be because 89% of the volunteers who answered this question were aged 50 or over and may be less concerned with improving their employment prospects.

48% of volunteers who answered the questions about their home county were shown to travel outside of their home county to volunteer. Suggesting that nearly half of our volunteers were willing to volunteer outside of their home county.

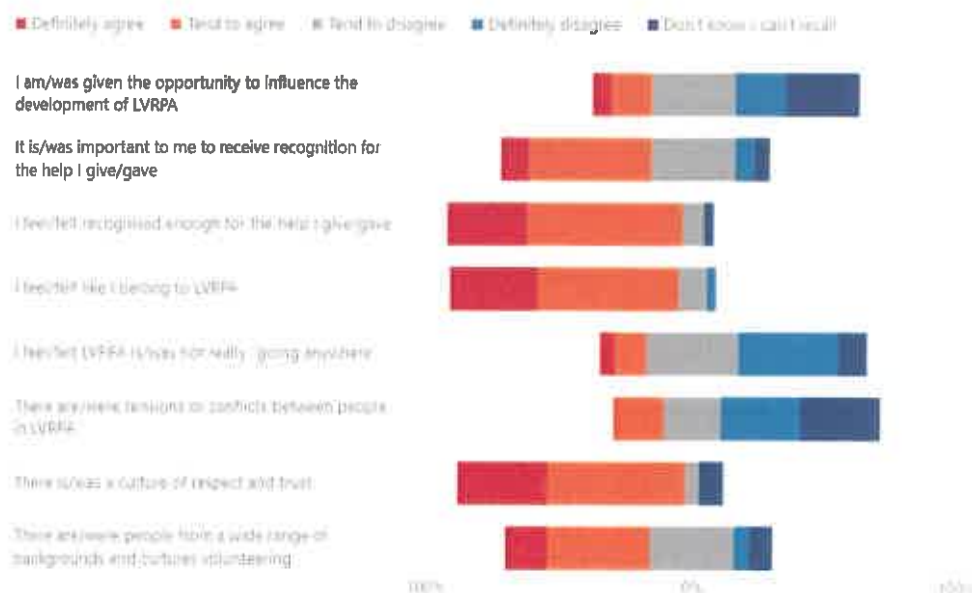
Volunteers were asked to read the statements below and choose an option from "Definitely agree", "Tend to agree", "Tend to disagree", "Definitely disagree" or "don't know / can't recall" based on their experience of volunteering with the Authority.



The results for this section of the survey were really useful and highlighted that more needs to be done to highlight the fact that the Authority reimburses travel expenses, as over half of those who took part in the survey were under the impression that the Authority would not reimburse expenses or were unsure about whether they would or not.

Only 8% of respondents expressed that they do not feel that they are putting their skills and experience to use while volunteering, which suggests the majority of volunteers surveyed feel that they are putting their skills and experience to good use.

Volunteers were asked to read the statements below and choose an option from "Definitely agree", "Tend to agree", "Tend to disagree", "Definitely disagree" or "don't know / can't recall" based on their experience of volunteering with the Authority.



This section of the survey gave mixed results. 50% of volunteers who answered this question did not believe that they were given the opportunity to influence the development of LVRPA. Around 19% felt tensions or conflicts between people and the organisation is not going anywhere. However, 88% feel/felt recognised for the help they give/gave and 85% feel/felt a sense of belonging and that there is a culture of respect and trust. One area which we are aware is still a problem is there are not enough people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures volunteering, with over a third of volunteers disagreeing with the statement “There are/were people from a wide range of backgrounds and cultures volunteering”. This is an area we are working on across the whole organisation.

Here is a summary of other comments:

- praise for the Ranger team;
- enjoyment of exercising their dog whilst litter picking;
- the Park is a wonderful space for all ages;
- would like to be involved in more skilled work;
- interesting and varied opportunities for volunteering;
- requests for uniform;
- interest in more weekend volunteering opportunities; and
- many volunteers said thank you.

9 Assess the potential for additional roles and opportunities to expand

- **Active Communities Learning and Engagement** are currently looking for additional volunteers to assist with the delivery of their programmes. **Community Health & Wellbeing** are actively trying to recruitment volunteers to support paid staff who are running a variety of activities throughout the Park aimed at encouraging visitors from all backgrounds to take positive steps towards improving their physical and mental fitness.
- **Communications** are looking into an intern role. Ideally the intern would help the department gather content including stories and images from around the Park.

- **Myddelton House Gardens** are looking to add to their current group of dedicated volunteers by advertising out for new volunteers who already have gardening knowledge to help with the restoration, including work with Capel Manor College to provide placements for their students. Once the restoration is complete, they will also open volunteering up to beginners who would like to learn about gardening.
- **Wildlife Discovery Centre** are looking for more volunteers to support further engagement with visitors and give out information about the Park and wildlife.
- **Ranger Services** in the north and south of the Park are providing more opportunities for volunteers to become Honorary Wardens. These volunteers are given the opportunity to volunteer more closely with Rangers on specific sites, taking on more responsibilities and developing new skills. This role is very popular with Capel Manor College students, people who are looking for a career change and those who want to take extra care of their local open spaces.

Other Authority departments are currently at capacity and unable to provide any additional volunteering opportunities at present.

In addition to our internal volunteering opportunities, we will continue to advertise opportunities that our external partners have available within our open spaces and venues. See Phase 1 of review of volunteering (Paper S/67/24) for our current list of partners.

10 **Future proofing the volunteer programme and reaching a wider diverse participant**

Surveying our volunteers was a useful exercise and the results will be used to improve our programme. An annual survey to check in with our volunteers will be put in place so that we can keep abreast of any issues that may crop up over time. In addition to this, staff will be dedicating more time to face to face interaction with volunteers and potential volunteers from all different backgrounds and ages, including at public fairs and events. Maintaining good relationships with partner organisations will be key so that we can continue to promote our programme via their networks (e.g. visitors, wildlife enthusiasts, sports lovers, students and NHS patients).

Examples of events in our diary include:

- annual Fresher's fairs at Hertford Regional College, Broxbourne campus and Hertford Regional College, Ware campus;
- Volunteers fairs at UCL, East campus, Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park;
- annual Broxbourne Volunteers Fair (in partnership with the NHS) at Laura Trott Leisure Centre in Cheshunt;
- Hackney Volunteers Fair at Homerton Library; and
- Enfield Volunteers Fair at Community House in Edmonton.

Our Community Health & Wellbeing Officer has planned new drop-in sessions at our venues, where visitors will have the chance to talk to staff and volunteers face to face about the volunteering opportunities we have on offer, particularly those that have a direct link to mental and physical health.

FUTURE PHASES OF REVIEW

11 Phase 4 (results to be presented at February 2025 Scrutiny Committee)

- Benchmark against regional statistics.
- Investigate how the Authority fully maximises funding opportunities for volunteers.

OTHER UPDATES

12 Accreditations

Work on Investing in Volunteers renewal reassessment is in progress. Step 1: Introductory workshop with our assessor and Step 2: Self-assessment checklist both complete. The Volunteers Officer is currently making progress with Step 3: Improving Practice. Areas highlighted by this plan included ensuring that all volunteer policies and strategy were up to date and to conduct a review into how volunteers receive feedback on their performance from their staff supervisors. The updated policy and strategy were approved at the Authority meeting held on 24 October (Paper A/4357/24) and copies will be sent to our assessor. The survey mentioned earlier in this report has given valuable insight into the type of feedback our volunteers would like from our staff. This information will help shape a pilot feedback programme which will be rolled out at the Wildlife Discovery Centre, one of our main volunteering hubs. If you would like to learn more about the Investing in Volunteers process, please click here: <https://investinginvolunteers.co.uk/six-step-process/>

13 Lone working

Lone workers are volunteers who work by themselves for some or all the time without close or direct supervision or support. Lone working information was sent via email as a reminder to all volunteers who take part in Lone Work to refamiliarise themselves with the procedure. A reminder was also sent out to all Authority managers to ensure that they have an effective system in place and that all staff / volunteers are aware of what that system is and for staff to ensure that they follow the processes that have been set up. It is important that all volunteers who volunteer alone (whether this be in an office/facility environment or in open spaces) follow the lone working procedure. There are different 'Buddy systems' that can be used and volunteers should discuss with their volunteer supervisor as to which is the best system to use. The different options include (but are not limited to) making a phone call, using WhatsApp groups, text messages etc. More information can be found on page 24 of the Volunteer Handbook - [V04 Volunteer Handbook 2024 website version 1.pdf \(visitleevalley.org.uk\)](#).

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 14 There are no environmental implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 15 There are no financial implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 16 There are no human resource implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 17 There are no legal implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 18 There are no risk management implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

- 19 There are no equality implications arising directly from the recommendations in this report.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LSC	Leisure Services Contract
GLL	Greenwich Leisure Limited
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

Scrutiny	S/68/24	Review of Volunteering Update	20 June 2024
Scrutiny	S/67/24	Review of Volunteering Update	29 February 2024
Executive	E/832/23	Review of Volunteering	14 Dec 2023
Scrutiny	S/65/23	Review of Volunteering	23 Nov 2023