

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 of this review was provided to the Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2024 (Paper S/67/24). This report updates the Scrutiny Committee on phase 2 of this review.

RECOMMENDATION

Members Note: (1) the update on phase 2 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).

PHASE 2 OF REVIEW

- 6 Phase 2 set out the following areas to review:
 - Investigate how our data compares to similar organisations / charities across the UK;
 - Investigate how our data using new gender categories compare to that of

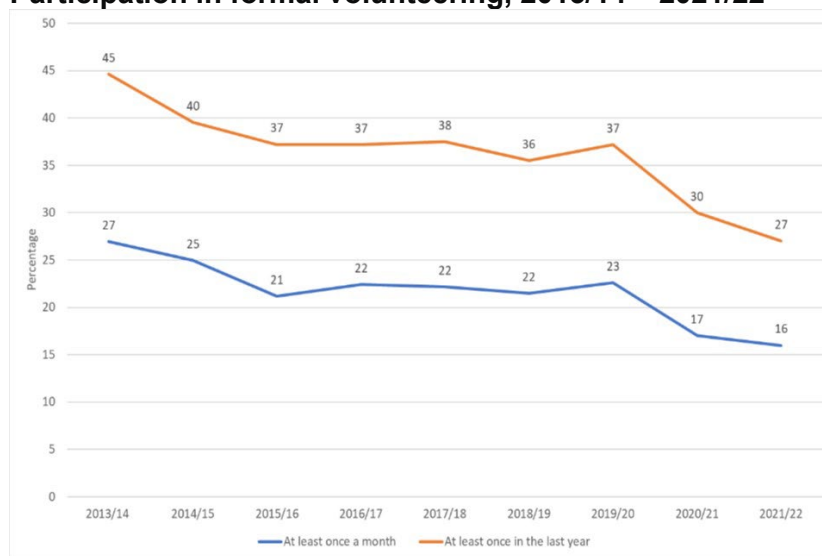
- the Office of National Statistics;
- Investigate new and innovative ways to incorporate new partnerships into our programme based on the increasing interest we have received; and
- Investigate how links from riparian boroughs are fully exploited to maximise the opportunities for local communities to access the Regional Park via volunteering.

PHASE 2 UPDATE

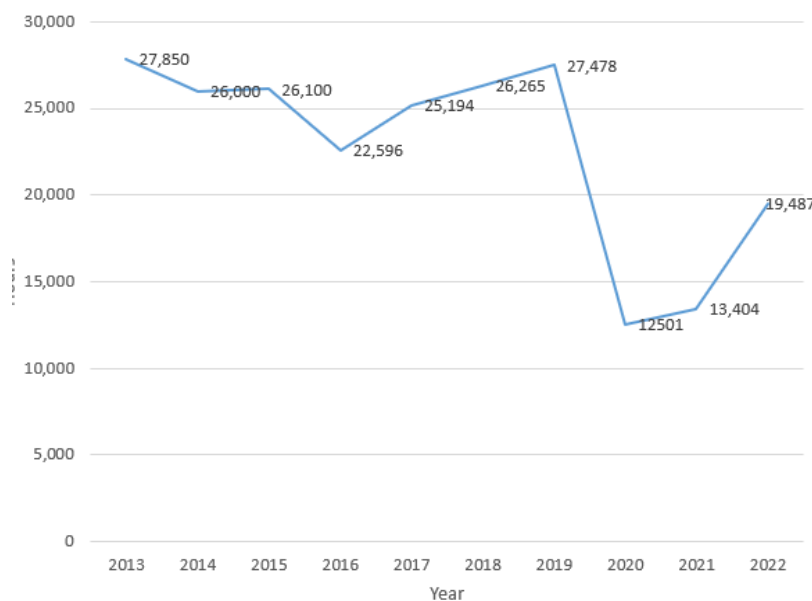
7 Investigate how our data compares to similar organisations / charities across the UK

Results from the Government’s most recent Community Life Survey (2021/22) show a noticeable drop: from 23% of the English population volunteering formally at least once a month in 2019/20, to 16% in 2021/22. See graph below taken directly from the Community Life Survey report.

Participation in formal volunteering, 2013/14 – 2021/22



Lee Valley Regional Park Authority volunteer hours, 2013-2022



Although two different types of data are being compared here (percentage of population who volunteer vs LVRPA volunteer hours) you can see that volunteering at LVRPA was on the rise before the pandemic rather than declining. Looking at our LVRPA data we can see a decline from 2013 to 2016 which may be due to fewer opportunities available after such a large number were linked to the London 2012 Games. There was a clear increase from 2016 to 2019 which may be due to a large number of events that took place throughout the Park during this time, hours getting recorded more consistently or communications about our programme getting out more effectively. It is believed that the reason why LVRPA volunteering gradually increased after the pandemic is because of the many outdoor volunteering roles we offer and that we have a dedicated team of volunteers who put their trust in our organisation to continue to keep them safe.

The Volunteers Officer is currently reviewing the Volunteers Policy and Strategy and one of the key updates to these documents will be replacing the term ethnic minority with the term Global Majority. Global Majority is a shortened version of 'People of the Global Majority', this term refers to all ethnic groups except white British and other white groups, including white ethnic minorities. This term has been adopted by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) who recently conducted research called Volunteering Among the Global Majority. Their research found that overall volunteer satisfaction has decreased since 2019.

Global Majority volunteers when compared to non-Global Majority volunteers were:

- lower rates of satisfaction;
- twice as likely to feel excluded;
- less likely to continue volunteering; and
- less likely to feel a sense of belonging.

The Global Majority non-volunteering population compared to the rest of the non-volunteering population were:

- more likely to volunteer in the next 12 months;
- more motivated by causes that are religious and help with career progression;
- less likely to volunteer if there is not a quick and easy on-boarding process;
- rating more highly the importance for a culture of trust, respect, recognition and sense of belonging within voluntary organisations;
- rating more highly the importance for volunteer roles to be flexible in the time and level of commitment they would need to give. Inflexibility was the main barrier to volunteering.

Please find links to the Volunteering Among the Global Majority research conducted by the National Council for Voluntary Organisations:

- summary of key findings, including a short video: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023-volunteering-among-the-global-majority/key-findings/>
- the full report: <https://www.ncvo.org.uk/news-and-insights/news-index/time-well-spent-2023-volunteering-among-the-global-majority/introduction/>.

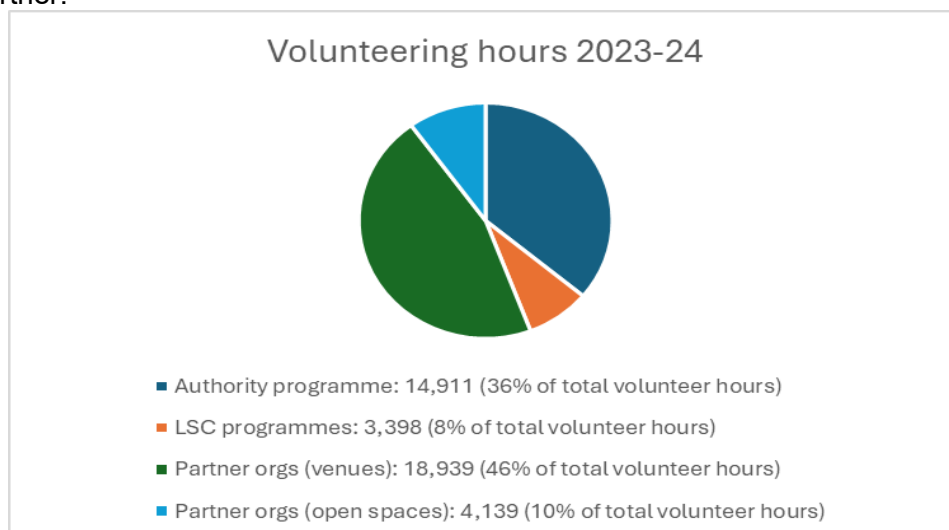
Going forward the LVRPA Volunteers team will be looking into the key implications for practice from this report in more detail with assistance of staff and volunteers in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion group when it is in place.

8 Investigate how our data using new gender categories compare to that of the Office of National Statistics

Unfortunately, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) data from 'The gender identity of usual residents aged 16 years and over in England and Wales, Census 2021' is not comparable to the data we collect. The 2021 survey separates in the categories of those whose gender identity is the same as sex registered at birth and those for which is different from sex registered at birth with more categories within this second option. The Authority collects data on how people prefer to identify rather than whether their gender and sex are the same. This data would be unnecessary to collect as we do not currently have any specific volunteering roles that require individuals to be a specific sex. It is therefore very difficult to say whether the gender of our volunteers is representative of the gender of the general population due to the difference in categories used. Looking at the answers on the census, 6% of those surveyed were not happy to share their gender identity compared with 1.8% of our volunteers. In conclusion we will continue to collect data on gender rather than sex but will not be able to gauge exactly how we compare with the general population data of ONS.

9 Investigate new and innovative ways to incorporate new partnerships into our programme based on the increasing interest we have received

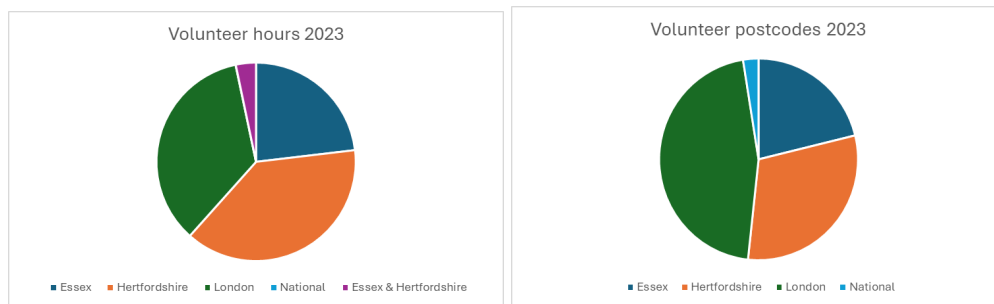
The Volunteers Officer has reached out to all of our partners (see Appendix A to this report) in order to find out how many are active and how much of an impact their volunteers are having within the Park. As a result it was discovered that we were massively under reporting the success of volunteering. Looking into our current programme at the end of the 2023-24 financial year there are 20 strong partnerships who contributed hours to our Park total. Thanks to the contribution of these partner organisations our volunteer hours data is now much more reflective of the Park and its partnerships. Please see below for a visual representation of volunteering hours for the previous financial year. Please note that Leisure Services Contract (LSC) venues have been separated out so that you can see the impact of their contribution not because they are an external partner.



Top 5 volunteering providers

British Canoeing (partnership at Lee Valley White Water Centre)	33%
Rangers department (Authority)	15%
Wildlife Discovery Centre (Authority)	10%
England Hockey (partnership at Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre)	9%
Lee Valley Riding Centre (LSC)	8%

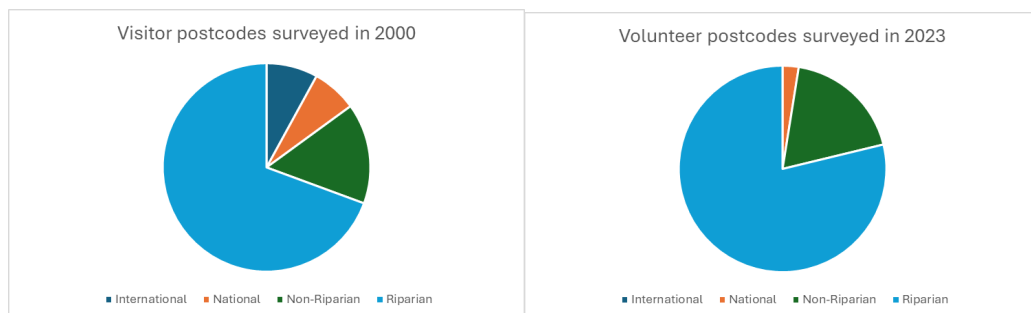
The pie charts below show that there seems to be fairly even distribution of volunteer hours across London, Essex and Hertfordshire, where as volunteer postcodes show a larger proportion of our volunteers who live in London. If we had more time it would be interesting to study how far each volunteer travels to volunteer as we know that many travel beyond their local borough to volunteer.



Through increased communications with these partnerships with their own established programmes we can refer many more people to volunteering opportunities within the Park. The Volunteers Officer has also been working with Simply Connect to ensure LVRPA opportunities are advertised on the new volunteer interface for London. Unfortunately there have been a few teething problems at their end and voluntary groups will be relying on the old Team London site until 17 May. LVRPA have also registered accounts to advertise volunteering opportunities through Volunteer Essex (Essex wide), GoVolHerts (Hertfordshire wide) and Doit.life (National).

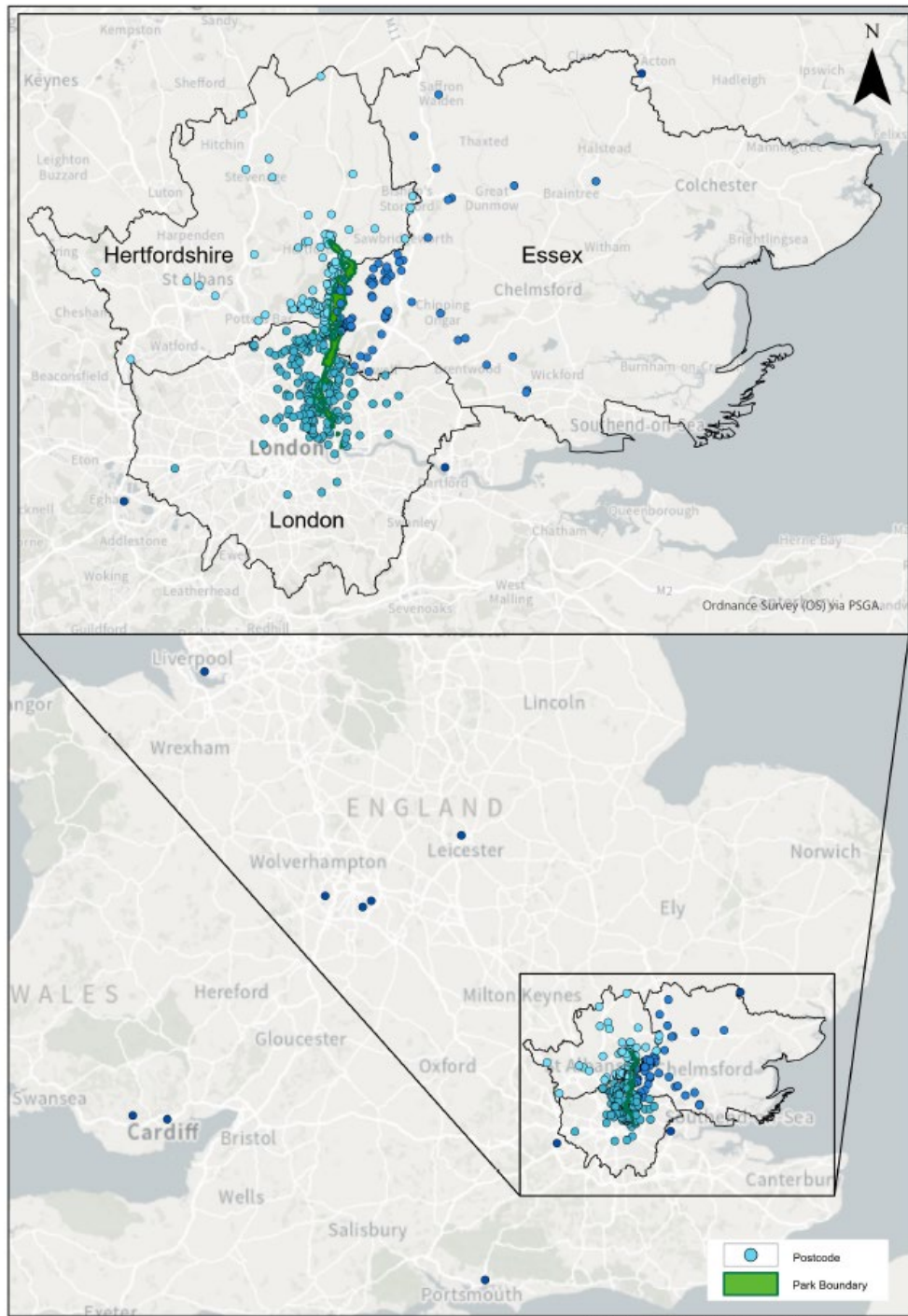
10 **Investigate how links from riparian boroughs are fully exploited to maximise the opportunities for local communities to access the Regional Park via volunteering**

Below are two charts which show visitors to the Park in 2000 and volunteers in the Park in 2023. Both show that most visitors and volunteers come from riparian boroughs, with 79% of volunteers living within a riparian borough.



The map below shows all of the postcodes of our volunteers plotted on it. This

shows a cluster of volunteer addresses within or very close to the Park boundary.



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Summary of current partners with addresses within riparian boroughs

Riparian borough	Partner organisations / groups
Broxbourne	CHEXS, Hertford Regional College (Broxbourne campus), British Canoeing, Lee Valley Paddlesports Club, Broxbourne Health Walks, Lee Valley Wombles, Saplings Begin Ltd, Active Herts, Herts Young Mariners Base, Wormley and Turnford Big Local

East Hertfordshire	Hertford Regional College (Ware campus), Ware In Bloom
Enfield	Capel Manor, E.A. Bowles Society
Epping Forest	Gunpowder Park Run, Nazeing History Workshop, Epping Forest MTB - Cycling for Health
Hackney	Clapton Green Gym, The Orchard Project
Haringey	Stonebridge Lock Coalition, Engine Room
Newham	Bikeworks (based at Lee Valley VeloPark (LVVP), Full Gas Cycling (based at LVVP), UCL East
Tower Hamlets	Queen Mary University of London
Waltham Forest	Lea Bridge Conservation Volunteers

There is an upcoming project from the Sports & Development department. Consultation work with local NHS social prescribers has highlighted the need for more low impact health & wellbeing initiatives that help people with mobility issues get back to leading a more active lifestyle. LVRPA were successfully awarded a grant from Sport England to develop an older persons exercise programme in Broxbourne which included Nordic walking. The funding allowed us to enrol three places onto a British Nordic Walking Instructor Course which we have given to volunteers. They are now qualified to lead Nordic walking sessions. Once they have gained some experience on other local sessions, they will then lead twice weekly walks starting from Lee Valley White Water Centre. As the programme grows we hope to get more volunteers involved with supporting this programme.

- 11 In summary, we have partnerships within all riparian boroughs. There seems to be the largest proportion of partnerships within Broxbourne in the north of the Park. This indicates that in future it would be good to focus efforts on building more partnerships in the south of the Park, particularly the London boroughs.

FUTURE PHASES OF REVIEW

12 Phase 3 (results to be presented at November 2024 Scrutiny Committee)

- 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 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

13 Data Protection

Following discussion at the last Scrutiny Committee on 29 February 2024 around the data kept on volunteers who are no longer volunteering, we have reviewed the information we hold. Our database has personal information

dating back to 2014. We intend to collate statistical information that is useful to retain about our previous volunteers, for example the number of volunteers from different geographic areas and equality, diversity and inclusion information. We will ensure this covers information that future funders may request. We will then delete information that we hold about individual volunteers that are no longer active with us. We anticipate that we will complete our first review of the database by 31 August 2024. We then propose to review this once a year as a minimum and to delete any records of volunteers that we have not had any contact from during the previous year unless they have expressly advised us that they wish to remain on our database.

14 **The value of our volunteers**

From a monetary value perspective, volunteer hours were reviewed if they were based on the national minimum wage (£11.44). The Park total equates to approx. £474,000. Breakdown below:

- Authority programme = £170,640;
- LSC programmes = £37,920;
- Partner organisations (venues) = £218,040; and
- Partner organisations (open spaces) = £47,400.

A few examples of the invaluable support volunteers bring to the Park are:

- Wildlife Discover Centre discovery room and tower opened to the public everyday and manned from 10:00 – 16:00;
- litter picking all year round throughout all our open spaces;
- Rye House Gatehouse open days throughout the year;
- conservation work conducted using hand tools reducing the impact to wildlife as well as noise pollution to the public;
- wildlife surveys in open spaces and visitor surveys at venues;
- eyes and ears out in the Park so that incidents can be reported to our teams straight away (e.g. fallen trees, fly tips);
- delivery of several walks programmes aimed at different areas of the community throughout the Park (including those referred to us by the NHS);
- increased engagement with visitors at events;
- support of our learning and engagement programmes;
- admin support for the volunteers and GIS staff teams;
- keeping Myddelton House Gardens looking beautiful and healthy;
- keeping down the price of activities throughout the Park so that fewer paid staff are needed to support programmes e.g. walks, Have a Go lessons (Lee Valley Riding Centre);
- daily checks of grazing livestock freeing up more time for the Rangers to focus on other areas of their workload;
- free and honest feedback on how the Park and its activities are being managed/run.

15 **Positive effects of volunteering on volunteers**

Examples of some the positive effects of volunteering on volunteers (this will also be detailed in our new policy and strategy):

- safe and pleasant environment to spend time outside of home;
- wide range of opportunities to try;

- gain skills and experience to become staff, examples include Rangers, activity instructors, gardeners and customer service assistants;
- time to socialise with like-minded people for all different walks of life;
- chance to become more engaged with / skilled in a hobby they are passionate about (e.g. bird watching);
- positive effect on their general wellbeing including mental health and physical health;
- free parking at our open spaces and venues;
- deeper knowledge and sense of connection to their locality;
- awards – long service, outstanding achievements;
- discounts at our venues; and
- claim back travel expenses.

16 **Accreditations**

Lee Valley Riding Centre have recently completed their Quest reassessment and chose to complete the volunteering based module, in which they scored excellent. The Volunteers Officer worked with the LSC team to provide a summary of volunteer stats relating to their venue.

Work on Investing in Volunteers renewal reassessment has started. Step 1 is now complete, which was an introductory workshop with our assessor. Step 2 is in progress and involves the Volunteer Officer completing the Self Assessment checklist. The Volunteer Officer will work with staff and volunteers to identify where the Authority and LSC venues are in relation to the standard. The assessor will then review the checklist with the Volunteers Officer so that it is clear about where the Authority and LSC venues are in relation to the standard. The assessor or adviser will also review three pieces of written evidence at this stage, one of these will be our Volunteer Policy or Handbook. This phase is to be completed within the next couple of months. If you would like to learn more about the Investing in Volunteers process please click here: <https://investinginvolunteers.co.uk/six-step-process/>

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

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

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

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

HUMAN RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

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

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

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

RISK MANAGEMENT IMPLICATIONS

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

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS

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

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APPENDIX ATTACHED

Appendix A Volunteering Partnerships

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

LSC	Leisure Services Contract
GLL	Greenwich Leisure Limited
NCVO	National Council for Voluntary Organisations
ONS	Office of National Statistics

PREVIOUS COMMITTEE REPORTS

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

Volunteering partnerships

Site / venue	Partner organisations
Lee Valley Hockey and Tennis Centre	England Hockey - Hockey Makers, GLL
Lee Valley VeloPark	Bikeworks, British Cycling, Full Gas Cycling, GLL
Lee Valley White Water Centre	British Canoeing, Lee Valley Paddlesports Club, GLL
Lee Valley Marina, Stanstead Abbots	Hertford Regional College – art students
Bow Creek Ecology Park	Queen Mary University of London
Gunpowder Park	CHEXS – conservation, Gunpowder Park Run, Hertford Regional College - Students with additional needs - Gunpowder Park project
Middlesex Filter Beds	Clapton Green Gym
Queen Elizabeth Olympic Park	London Legacy Development Corporation - wildlife surveys GLL
Tottenham Marshes	Stonebridge Lock Coalition, Engine Room - Tottenham 10 (10k run & walk)
Walthamstow Marshes, Leyton Marsh, WaterWorks Centre Nature Reserve and WaterWorks Fields	Lea Bridge Conservation Volunteers
Park wide	British Trust for Ornithology
Amwell End	Ware In Bloom
Broxbourne - various	Broxbourne Health Walks, Lee Valley Wombles,
Broxbourne Old Mill and Meadows	Saplings Begin Ltd
Clayton Hill	Nazeing History Workshop - walks
Fishers Green	CHEXS – conservation
Pindar and Cheshunt Country Walk	Active Herts - Wednesday Wellbeing Walk, Herts Police - Children and Young People Team, Herts Young Mariners Base – walks
River Lee Country Park - various	Epping Forest MTB - Cycling for Health, Lee Valley Wombles, Capel Manor College students, Hertford Regional College - conservation tasks for students from various departments
Turnford Brook	Wormley & Turnford Big Local - Walks programme
Waltham Abbey Gardens	Orchard Project
Waltham Common Lock	Canal & River Trust
TBC	University College London