

VOLUNTEERING IN HILLINGDON

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REASON FOR ITEM

At the Committee meeting on 11 April 2017, it was suggested that a review take place into Volunteering in Hillingdon. Following advice from Officers, Members agreed that a different topic was more suitable for a review, but requested an update on the topic in the absence of a review.

RECOMMENDATION

That the Committee noted the report on Volunteering in Hillingdon.

BACKGROUND

What do we mean by Volunteering?

Volunteering takes many forms across all communities, all sectors and all parts of our Borough. It is driven by a desire on behalf of individuals to help and support others, to seek and influence change, through pride and/or concern for our community and environment, or to pick up skills and experience and to enjoy sport, leisure and culture.

Common themes that mark out volunteers are a selfless commitment towards helping others for no financial reward or personal benefit other than perhaps satisfaction, learning and enjoyment.

The term "Social Capital" was developed about 20 years ago to describe the glue that bonds communities together through the networks, groups and relationships. Volunteering is at the heart of effective Social Capital.

Volunteering in Hillingdon

Hillingdon is home to a vibrant and diverse voluntary and community sector (VCS or third sector), consisting of more formal and well-known charities, to sport, youth and uniformed groups, faith groups, resident and community associations, through to very informal sometimes ephemeral groups and networks.

All of these groups will rely on volunteers to provide governance as trustees, to lead and manage organisations and to deliver functions and services to residents around Hillingdon. Many will consider themselves as getting involved as and when to help out rather than as any formal role. Many of our VCS groups would struggle without the regular throughput and commitment of keen and able volunteers.

In addition, employers may consider supporting volunteers from outside their workforce to gain experience or skills, or from within their workforce to encourage philanthropy and to support projects or groups.

The significant student population at Brunel University and at Uxbridge College is actively involved in volunteering, with students being encouraged to support a number of activities and initiatives and make a valuable contribution to the local community. Brunel holds an annual awards dinner for its students, in order to recognise their efforts and celebrate with local partners in order to strengthen the relationship with the wider community.

Hillingdon Council Supporting and Encouraging Volunteering

Hillingdon Council provides nearly £2m through a **programme of core grants** to 38 groups, designed to enable them to meet some of their central core costs and to provide capacity so that they may generate further investment and promote volunteering. They range from well-known groups such as Age UK Hillingdon, Hillingdon Carers, Citizens Advice Bureau, Hillingdon MIND and Disability Association of Hillingdon (DASH), through to smaller groups such as the Pinner and Ruislip Beekeepers Association. Each of these groups depends heavily on volunteers to deliver their services and the Council-core grant enables them to support and develop their volunteering offer.

Recycle-a-Bike (RAB) is a **social enterprise based** in Fassnidge Park Uxbridge. RAB offers **volunteering opportunities** including training to residents who experience mental health problems. Opportunities exist in both their bike workshop and in the park cafeteria. Many participants have moved into paid employment after they have gained skills and confidence at RAB. The Council supports the operations via a small voluntary sector grant.

Through the **Leader's Older Peoples Initiative**, voluntary groups are encouraged to provide activities and events for older people in our communities, offering opportunities to promote wellbeing and to reduce loneliness. Last year, over 44 individual grants were awarded to groups. The Council also provides grants to support older peoples dining centres.

The Council, through the work of its Strong and Active Communities Partnership, recognises that volunteering plays an important role in **building strong and cohesive communities**, bringing people together and building social capital. From schools to faith communities to the fire/police service the partnership identifies opportunities to collaborate together and engage local people in local projects and initiatives. Supported by the Mayor of Hillingdon, the partnership has delivered an **annual Volunteer Awards** ceremony, gaining sponsorship from local businesses, to recognise and thank the variety of volunteers across the borough.

The Council is also **promotes and encourages volunteering via its Hillingdon People** residents magazine and use of website and social media. Hillingdon People has dedicated pages to volunteer stories and opportunities. The Council website provides a number of links to volunteering opportunities with established local charities and groups, including in parks and gardens, as well as residents associations and community centres.

Hillingdon Council also has in place **policies to enable volunteering**, where appropriate, within and alongside its services. Guidance sets out the process officers should consider when seeking to recruit a volunteer, including ensuring that volunteers do not replace paid staff. Whilst processes are in place, in practice, it is mostly front-line services where volunteers can contribute, for example libraries, youth centres, and the new WWII bunker visitors centre etc.

How to Volunteer

The simplest way to find an opportunity to volunteer is to log onto the Do-it.org website, which is set up to broker opportunities between those seeking to volunteer and opportunities that exist locally. On 21 February 2018, there were 167 opportunities within 5 miles of Uxbridge, 970 within 10 miles, and 5,181 within 20 miles. Local groups were seeking volunteers for office support/receptionist roles, charity shop assistants, social media support, listening volunteers, trustees and volunteer drivers, amongst many others.

In addition, the H4All voluntary sector consortium (consisting of AgeUKH, Hillingdon Carers, MIND, DASH and Harlington Hospice) has established its own volunteering hub to co-ordinate its efforts in recruiting and supporting volunteers (see: <http://www.h4all.org.uk/volunteer-hub>).

Brunel University also brokers and develops volunteering opportunities for its student base (see <http://brunelvolunteers.com/>), and Uxbridge College offers similar support.

Data on Volunteering

There is a lack of good quality data on local volunteering. The only meaningful way to obtain data would be via a representative survey. There are some, rather out of date, surveys we can consider to give some sort of local picture:

- The Taking Part Survey, conducted by DCMS and published via the GLA data store, sets volunteering in Hillingdon at 24% of the adult (16+) population based on a three- year average between 2010/2011 and 2012/2013;
- The former Place Survey, last undertaken in 2008, put adult volunteering in Hillingdon at 21.8%;
- A Cabinet Office Community Life Survey 2015-2016 sought data through surveys on formal, informal and overall volunteering (adults at least once a year). This set a national percentage figure at 70% for overall (60% informal and 41% formal), though the survey also shows that number would be lower for London at 54%. The survey does not break down to borough level.
- The last Sport England active people survey in 2014, identified that some 15% of the population in Hillingdon had volunteered in sport.
- Our 38 core grant recipients reported that they benefitted in total from involvement of some 1,360 volunteers in 2017/18.