

When the vacancy for a member champion for the volunteer sector was advertised amongst the group last year, I believed it was just that, a vacancy. I had no idea I would be taking the role from someone else simply because the majority of the votes would fall to me regardless of whether I was the better candidate or not. Knowing what I know now I want to apologise to Councillor Taylor but also thank him for giving me support and the odd steer throughout the year.

The year started with a group of volunteers from the allotments that helped me supply and plant new plants in The Blind Garden after it had been vandalised. We were supplied with a free skip from B&P Skips a local Rainham skip company and we spent the day with HVC volunteers clearing the mountain of soil that was used to climb over the fence. We didn't return the garden to its former glory but we certainly gave it a boost in the right direction.



In July I was invited to a UKIM community event that was organised to celebrate the first anniversary of Dagenham Foodbank. There were other local Councillors in attendance from Dagenham & Redbridge and we all seemed to have a common bond which was to help those that needed it the most. I truly believed this was a meet & greet afternoon so I was surprised and honoured to be awarded a certificate in recognition of my services to the community



Anyone who volunteers to help others or help to make their community a better place never does it for recognition or credit they do it selflessly and with the best intentions, so this certificate with its few simply words meant more to me than if it was made in gold.



I was already along with my likeminded friends and volunteers working closely with a wonderful kind hearted caring Man called Nilesh who received an O.B.E. in January's New Year's Honours List. Through his own life experiences and setbacks he was determined that no child should ever go hungry and that if they worked hard and believed in themselves they could change their lives and others for the better. Nilesh founded "Icanyoucanto" and we are very very lucky to know him and be a part of his outreach team.

Every Easter and Christmas "Icanyoucanto" send food parcels, hygiene products, store cupboard ingredients and either Easter eggs or selection boxes to identified families throughout the holidays ensuring that no child goes hungry or feels left out

"Icanyoucanto" help us support our 5 identified local families and because we can outreach too many more groups we are able to support several elderly residents, local hostels and refuges, the homeless and veterans.

We have now extended this work to a weekly O.A.P.Club in The Ship Café in Rainham. Here pensioners can come and have a free hot meal, drink and company. No one goes home empty

handed and we try and ensure most people go home with three or four meals to help them through the week.

We are very fortunate to have local shop keepers who help us with monetary and food donations, we also benefited this year with funding from The Community Chest which has helped us to expand further.



icanyoucantoo CIC



I am at Rainham Hub every Wednesday holding surgeries and helping other health professionals Signpost people in the right direction.

Never underestimate the power of signposting and networking as before I took this role I never knew half of this help was available, now I am able to point people in the right direction and if I can't it is likely that I would know someone who could.

It sounds like I have only concentrated on Rainham & Wennington and to a degree this is true. I have though attended as many HVMF meetings as I could, meeting and networking with charities. I am under no illusion that the community group we run from The Ship benefitted from a community chest grant because of networking, my role as champion and my position as a councillor.

The volunteer sector plays a huge part in today's budget cut society. Not only are volunteers doing tremendous unpaid work across our borough they are also showing potential employees they have a willingness to learn and grow and a great work ethic, no employee wants to see gaps in a cv. Volunteering is also good for your mental wellbeing as it can give you back your sense of worth and achievement. You meet new people, you learn new skills, the worst thing in our society today is the feeling of not belonging, loneliness and not being worthy. Volunteering is not a medical miracle but it is certainly a step in the right direction.

I have heard many times that Havering and any other Borough for that matter cannot run without volunteers and this is becoming more and more evident as our outgoings far exceed our income.

This is why the funding for The Havering Volunteer sector is so very important.

HVC should technically hear by October the amount of funding they will receive the following year.

This notice has never come later than February but this year they had to wait until April which led to all sorts of uncertainty's and worries.

They had to run two budgets, one with funding, one without, creating unnecessary work.

If the funding never materialised by September HVC would have been eating into their reserves and contemplating redundancies.

External funding is extremely difficult to get so it really comes down to how much The Council values volunteers and The Volunteer Sector.

At the very least I would hope that they hear earlier than April next year whether they are receiving funding or not especially as this goes towards the almost 16k rent and rates they pay yearly to LBH.

Leases, parking, Council Tax and of course utilities have risen drastically in some cases up to 50%.

Receiving £56,272 per year for the past 8 years needs to also be raised dramatically to show HVC just how valued the volunteer sector is in Havering.

In the last 8 years HVC have accomplished an economic cost avoidance in Havering of £32.8m as a direct saving by volunteer hours.

If we make the maths simple HVC receive **£56k** per year minus £16k rent & rates back to LBH = **£40k**

An economic cost avoidance as a direct saving in volunteer hours of **£32m** in 8 year's = **£4m** per year.

A £40k cost per year for £4m worth of man hours proves exactly how much HVC is valued by LBH! 1p per hour!!

If other departments were this cost effective budget deficits would be a thing of the past, come on LBH lets give our most valued volunteer sector a rise to at least **2p** per hour!

