

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD, 16 APRIL 2025

Subject Heading:

Scrutiny of Havering Volunteer Centre (HVC)

SLT Lead:

Marcus Chrysostomou, Head of Communications & Engagement

Report Author and contact details:

Jerry Haley, Deputy Head of Community Engagement jerry.haley@havering.gov.uk

Policy context:

The Board has been asked to scrutinise the two external grants that the Council makes to organisations. These are to Havering Volunteer Centre (HVC) and the Citizen's Advice Havering (CAH). This report concentrates on the HVC,

SUMMARY

The Board has been asked to comment on the following four criteria:

- Does the HVC represent value for money both for residents and the Council?
- Does the organisation receive any other external funding?
- What would be the impact if Council funding ceased?
- Are there any alternative organisations that could provide these services?

RECOMMENDATIONS

That the Overview and Scrutiny Board scrutinises the issues around funding of the Havering Volunteer Centre and makes any recommendations it considers appropriate.

REPORT DETAIL

Does the HVC represent value for money both for residents and the Council?

The Havering Volunteer Centre (HVC) was established in 2015 by its CEO Shelley Hart, following the closure of the Borough's Council for Voluntary Service (CVS). This closure left a significant gap in the volunteer sector, and the need to create a central hub for recruiting and supporting volunteers. With backing from the local authority, a three year grant, HVC was set up in Romford, ensuring accessibility and excellent transport links. The HVC has since grown, becoming a vital resource for volunteering in the community.

In 2024/25, HVC has **7,657** volunteers on its books. These volunteers took part in a variety of community activities such as:

- Refugee & Asylum Support i.e Ukraine
- Flood Warden Volunteer
- Climate Champion Volunteer
- Community/Spring Clean Up Volunteer
- Where we Live

In addition to this have supported over **400** organisations with volunteers to support their service delivery. Much of this activity supports the delivery of vital services to residents and assists Havering in meeting its statutory obligations.

Some of these organisation supported are as follows:

- **Citizens Advice** _- HVC currently provides Email and Telephone assessor Volunteers which help to triage and support their clients who are in need. We have also supported them with Trustees, IT Support and Employment Advisor.
- **Havering Carers Hub** – HVC currently support them with Carer's Voice Volunteers and supports them with Minibus Drivers and Chaperones.
- **Tapestry** – HVC currently provide volunteers to support the Food Delivery, Men in Sheds, Warm Space Volunteer; all of these roles are key to the services delivered by Tapestry.
- **Age UK** – Currently HVC are providing volunteers for Age UK's Digital Champion role, to connect older people to the internet and their devices, in keeping with the council's desire to shift more services online. Telephone befriending and Home Visiting Befriending Service for older isolated residents..
HVC additionally supports the Care Navigation role, Admin Dementia Support Volunteer, Discharge Follow Up, & Falls prevention Observer
- **H.A.D** – HVC supports HAD with volunteers as a Community Friend both Face to face and telephone.

- **Samaritans** – HVC currently recruits volunteers for Samaritans as a Listening Volunteer, these volunteers will be trained to answer calls from people facing crisis, and supports the work of the suicide prevention strategy.
- **Foodbanks** – Currently HVC recruit volunteers for Havering foodbank groups, to collect and deliver food for redistribution across the borough

Some of these organisations receive funding to deliver specific projects in Havering. Some of these are funded by the Local Authority and Health but all seek support from HVC to recruit volunteers to deliver the services they are funded to do. HVC does not receive any funding from these organisations for the engagement of volunteers, HVC's service is free to all organisations to access.

It should be noted that the grant of £56k from the Council has remained unchanged since 2015.

Since its inception in 2015, Havering Volunteer Centre are:

- Supporting the London Borough of Havering directly with over **£5.8 million of volunteer hours saved** across 11 service areas some of which are outlined below:
 - LBH Waste and Recycling Team – Working in partnership to support Community Clean Ups, connected Havering Green Streets and Harold Hill and Romford Wombles into services. Provided libraries with litter picks and collection bags to enable residents to actively litter pick their areas. This is fundamental to the recently launched Where We Live Campaign. For example; HVC undertook a flash mob clean up with 10 Community Clean Up Champions and collected 50 bags of waste in one short afternoon. **That's a £700 saving in one afternoon just in volunteer hours.**
 - Langtons – HVC heavily supports Langtons with a number of events and volunteers for projects. 35 volunteers undertake one 4 hour shift once a week for one year that's **£7,280 of volunteering hours saved** in just 12 months.
 - LBH Housing Services – HVC provided **121** volunteers for the housing team to be able to improve their relationship with tenants but more importantly HVC have provided 10 free training sessions to staff members. This has **saved the local Authority £1000 in training costs** for staff
This support will be vital with recent legislation changes around "tenant voice"
 - LBH Education – HVC have provided 52 school governor volunteers in order for local schools to meet their obligations. This is a notoriously difficult role to fill. GovernorsforSchools.org.uk report that on average each governor provides £2,022 worth of support in terms of time and expertise to schools each year. That's **£105,144 of**

support from HVC's Volunteers a year, however a governor's term is 4 years!

- LBH Early Help Service – 341 Volunteers to Early Help Services to help with projects at Children's Centres across the borough. We suspect with the growing rate of child population, demand on this area of service will increase.
- LBH Havering Adult College – 23 volunteers have been provided to Adult College to support Admin at Bower Park and also a learning Support Assistant support **totalling £117,208 of cost avoidance.**
- LBH My Place Youth Centre – HVC have supported MyPlace with 73 Youth Worker Volunteers supporting people aged 10+ right through to their young adult years. **That's £372,008 worth of volunteer support.**
- LBH Library Services – HVC supports LBH Library services with 17 volunteering opportunities within Libraries across Havering. These have included support with events and groups sessions. More frequent support is provided to direct library services such as Meet & Greet Volunteers, Summer Reading Challenge Volunteers, Homework Buddies and Tech Volunteers. HVC have referred **607 volunteers to support library services this is a significant cost avoidance.**
- There have also been 42 Climate Champion volunteers recruited and trained and 15 flood wardens. Both of these cohorts of volunteers were called upon to support Council Operatives with the Storm Franklin clean up across the borough.
- **LBH Emergency Planning (Community Resilience)** – HVC are also heavily involved in the Community Resilience of Havering. This stemmed from the work undertaken during Covid-19 whereby HVC were mobilised from the 17th March supporting residents with emergency food and support 4 weeks prior to LBH's distribution hub being operational.
During the Afghanistan Humanitarian Appeal, Havering became the South East Donation Hub for London putting Havering in the foresight of British Red Cross and the London Community Emergency Partnership.
This work brought Havering to the table and at the centre of the Bringing Resilience Together project with Havering being awarded support to develop cohesive partnerships between HVC and LBH in terms of borough resilience. HVC were also instrumental in supporting the Local Authority with the Wennington Fire Donation hub this saved LBH money in terms of staff time and resources. The donation hub was also heavily featured on BBC news again showcasing the hard work of Havering in supporting residents. The support provided by HVC lasted 9 months which would have been

unsustainable if delivered by LBH personnel. This was unfunded and completely resourced by HVC including Volunteer Expenses.

- Supported the entire borough of Havering with £66.1 million in volunteering hours, saved across the VCSE & Statutory Partners. These numbers are calculated using a nationally recognised formula for the conversion of volunteering hour

In addition to the work above HVC have undertaken projects that support the wider voluntary and community sector and our statutory partners, For example:

- HVC recruited and supplied the NHS with 100 volunteers a day to support two vaccination centre during the COVID-19 vaccination programme. The Hornchurch Vaccination Centre was purported to by the then Health Secretary as the best functioning vaccination centre in the whole of the UK. NHS partners stated that a huge part of the centre's success was down to the role the volunteers played.
During this period which extended to 15 months of support **HVC's volunteers attributed to a cost avoidance of £19,190,148** via volunteering hours at both sites. HVC received no financial support to deliver the vaccination programme in Havering.
- HVC also manage and maintain the Sensory Garden in Harrow Lodge Park and have done since 2016. The garden situated next to Havering Mind was overgrown and closed for a number of years. HVC have undertaken all of the maintenance and general upkeep of the garden with a team of volunteers. This has meant that LBH have not had to expend any of their own resources on the space. **That's £524,160 of volunteer support provided to the Sensory Garden.**
- As a direct result of volunteering, HVC have supported **534 individuals secure employment**. These residents all sought volunteering for very different reasons but are now all successfully earning and contributing to the local economy as a direct result of HVC's work.
- In addition, HVC also operate a Check In & Chat telephone befriending service. This service is free and open to any resident in Havering. HVC receive referrals from LBH staff and Social Prescribers for residents in Havering. They have had huge successes from delivering this service such as patients reducing the need to seek medical help for social issues and residents reporting an increase in confidence and reduction in isolation. This service is currently unfunded with volunteers placing weekly calls despite their being a cost to HVC. **200 hours of calls are placed weekly which is a yearly cost saving of £145,600.**
- The HVC currently supports NELFT with volunteer recruitment, on boarding and retention for the St George's Health and Wellbeing Hub and manage 100 volunteers who support the patients and staff on site.
- HVC are also a major contributor to the Voluntary Sector by providing Trustees and Governors in order for organisations to operate. HVC provide support via Trustee recruitment, training and policy support in order for organisations to adhere to their legal obligations.

Does the organisation receive any other external funding?

Havering Volunteer Centre is not a subsidiary of any larger national charity and has to income generate by fundraising, donations and grants. As per HVC's last set of financial accounts **income was £179,336** with **expenditure of £169,765**. HVC's **current reserves are: £86,000**

Some of the above income was obtained via the following avenues:

- Sensory Garden £3,742
- Climate Champion £11,197
- B&Q Neighbourly £5,000
- Community Chest £4,630
- Mayor's Weekend Fund £1,000
- Homes For Ukraine £5,850
- Roots 3 Round 2 £26,000
- Community Resilience Fund £9,957
- Warm Hugs Project £9,912
- HBBS – AGFH Project £5,845

The above funds are ring-fenced to be expended against projects and deliverables.

In addition to this HVC also received £19,983 in room hire against an expenditure of building costs directly incurred by HVC of £27,898.

It should be noted that funding from the local authority gives other prospective funders confidence to also consider funding. Full accounts that have been independently examined with details of all funds received are available on the Charity Commission website.

Nationally Volunteer Centre's have difficulty in securing infrastructure external funding, as funders require 'projects/programmes/schemes' to fund and not Organisations looking to support their sustainability through infrastructure costs.

HVC have been successful in securing small grants to support projects/programmes that they have delivered to support residents, VCS & public sector, but the grant has had to be spent on project costs only.

What would be the impact if Council funding ceased?

Funding received from the London Borough of Havering allows the HVC to exist in the borough and provide services that are dedicated to volunteering and associated activities.

The cessation of council funding for the Havering Volunteer Centre could have significant consequences, including:

- **Reduced Services.** The Volunteer Centre would struggle to maintain its current level of support for volunteers and community groups, leading to

fewer opportunities for local engagement. Unfortunately, without Council funding at the moment the HVC would very likely close

- Increased Pressure on Other Services. Without the HVC support, other community services would face demand without a volunteer resource, potentially overwhelming their capacity.
- Loss of Community Cohesion: The Centre plays a vital role in fostering connections and collaboration within the sector and community. Its absence would weaken these bonds.

It also needs to be noted:

- HVC have worked in partnership to run funding fayres with LBH in the past to help bring new money into the Borough. They also provide information to other voluntary and community organisations to support their funding applications to bring much needed funds into the Borough. HVC directly matched The Habbit Factory with BBC Children in Need. Not only did this bring in funding to Havering for a VCSE organisation but the BBC showcased The Habbit Factory on the programme in 2023 and 2024 putting Havering on the map.
- HVC also launched the Havering Local Lottery which is currently supporting 45 local organisations to income generate a collective £18,500. Without HVC this opportunity would not have launched and if HVC have to close so would the Local Lottery platform.
- Working with them and through the GLA we now have a cohort of resilience volunteers and other organisations signed up as 'resilience hubs' should we face emergencies such as Wennington and Covid again. With climate change as it is we are likely to be more and more reliant on trained volunteers in the future. This work has been showcased across the UK with presentations being delivered at City Hall and Resilience Forums across the UK. Again, showcasing Havering and the partnership work between statutory and Voluntary Sector.
- Our fledgling Giving Scheme. Because we have no Council for Voluntary Service, London Funders have said a Giving Scheme is unlikely to succeed unless we have commitment from the volunteer centre. Giving Schemes are participatory schemes to bring in new funds and new resources into an area.
- HVC are also supporting the Community Chest Programme which will support a number of groups to access local funding.
- To make initiatives like 'Where we Live' not just an initiative but a change of culture in Havering the council will need volunteers to drive this.
- HVC are also working with LBH to develop a corporate volunteering policy to enable LBH staff to undertake volunteering in the local community. Currently,

the only way to make this viable is for HVC to enable LBH staff to operate under their guidance.

- The HVC are also members of the Havering Placed Based Partnership and are instrumental in setting up volunteer capacity for the new St Georges Hub. They have worked since day one on this

Are there any alternative organisations that could provide these services?

There are no other generic volunteering services in the Borough.

Havering Volunteer Centre is the only licenced and accredited Volunteer Centre in Havering. This means that HVC have been assessed and graded to a high standard in volunteer recruitment, retention, management and best Practice. This has been assessed and awarded by NAVCA an independent organisation.

There is no organisation currently operating in Havering that can undertake the work that HVC does to the standard, volume or capacity. Whilst some VCSE organisation may be able to recruit volunteers internally these are not to the numbers that HVC can deliver on.

HVC is the only organisation in Havering with a large capacity of volunteers who have the ability to mobilise them in a swift manner and with the ability to carry out their duty and functionality.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

Financial implications and risks:

There are no financial implications associated with this monitoring report.

Legal implications and risks:

There are no legal implications associated with this report.

Human Resources implications and risks:

There are no human resource implications for the Council.

Equalities implications and risks:

There are no equality implacations associated with this monitoring report.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

There are none.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

There are no background papers.