

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee(s): Corporate Services Committee	Dated: 27 th November 2024
Subject: Volunteering Update	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes 	Diverse Engaged Communities; Leading Sustainable Environment; Vibrant Thriving Destination; Providing Excellent Services; Flourishing Public Spaces
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	£
What is the source of Funding?	[add details]
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
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Summary

This report provides an update on activities of the corporate volunteering function within the City of London Corporation.

Volunteering makes an important contribution to the City Corporation, its stakeholders and wider community in the Square Mile, London and beyond, through the efforts of both City Corporation employee volunteers and external community volunteers who add value to the City Corporation's activities.

Between 2018-2023, a Corporate Volunteering Strategy set out the City Corporation's vision for volunteering and resulted in an uplift in employee volunteering hours and impact; a clear transition towards a centralised approach to engaging the 750+ external community volunteers supporting Corporation activities; and better insight into current resident volunteering needs in the city.

In November 2023, the Corporate Volunteering Manager left the organisation, leading to a temporary pause in the centrally managed programme while a replacement was recruited. This pause provided a strategic opportunity to move, from mid-2024 onwards, oversight of volunteering from the Philanthropy Director, based in City Bridge Foundation, to People and HR, incorporating volunteering within the new People Strategy and aligning it to the new Corporate Plan.

In July 2024, a new Volunteering Manager was appointed and the programme resumed. In the last four months, developments include the creation of a five-year volunteering action plan within the Wellbeing and Belonging strand of the People Strategy; positive staff re-engagement through the LEAP employee volunteering programme; re-establishment of the Volunteer Working Group whose focus includes providing aligned and consistent oversight of external community volunteers; and planning for the recruitment of a new group of volunteer Royal Event Supporters to support high-profile Royal events in the City.

Recommendation(s)

Members are asked to note the report.

Main Report

1. Background

The City Corporation has a positive volunteering culture, bringing a wealth of benefits to the community, volunteers, the City Corporation and its stakeholders. In support of this, since 2018, a central corporate volunteering function has been resourced, the aims of which include:

- increasing the number of employees utilising their annual 14-hour paid special leave for volunteering.
- providing support to volunteer managers in the Environment, Innovation and Growth, Town Clerk's, and Community and Children's Services departments, recognising the contribution of the 750+ external community volunteers in the Corporation's activities.

As part of this work, a five-year Corporate Volunteering Strategy (2018-2023) was developed, setting out the City Corporation's vision for volunteering in which the organisation has a positive volunteering culture, with clear and consistent practices, supporting volunteers and their beneficiaries to flourish in the Square Mile, London and beyond. As part of this strategy, the LEAP employee volunteering programme was launched in October 2020, offering a centrally managed platform for individual and team-based volunteering. The benefits of

employer-supported volunteering programmes¹ for both employees and organisations are increasingly recognised, with organisations across industries investing in such initiatives. Outcomes include:

- increased employee engagement, workplace satisfaction and well-being
- talent recruitment and retention
- professional skills development and utilisation
- increased team building and organisational collaboration
- increased community and stakeholder engagement
- innovation and new perspectives
- enhanced organisational reputation

The Covid-19 pandemic and the Target Operating Model (TOM) restructure created a challenging context in which to deliver the strategy. Despite this however, LEAP achieved an overall uplift in employee engagement as shown in the table below.

	2020 - 2021	2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024*	Total
LEAP Registrations	47	93	108	105	353
Active Volunteers	30	111	153	170	471
Volunteer Hours	282	1013	1606	853	4587

*During 2023-24, volunteering was supported centrally by a Corporate Volunteering Manager for eight months only.

In May 2023, The Social Innovation Partnership (TSIP)² evaluated the LEAP programme through an equality, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) lens. The report highlighted the benefits of the programme such as fostering relationships, enhancing a sense of purpose, and developing community-related skills and knowledge. These findings align with those of the recent *Works4U UK Employee Volunteering Report 2022-23*³ and the NCVO's 2019 *Time Well Spent: Employer-Supported Volunteering*⁴ report, both of which speak to the positive impacts of employer-supported volunteering.

¹ Corporate Citizenship. (2010). *Volunteering the Business Case*. https://corporate-citizenship.com/wp-content/uploads/Volunteering_The_business_case-1.pdf

² The Social Innovation Partnership. (2023) *The City of London Corporation LEAP Evaluation Report* <https://www.citybridgefoundation.org.uk/assets/documents/LEAP-Evaluation-employer-supported-volunteering-TSIP-report.pdf>

³ Works4u. (2022). *UK EV 2022-23 Report*. Works4u.org.uk. <https://www.works-4u.com/uk-ev-2022-23-report#:~:text=UK%20Employee%20Volunteering%202022-23%20Report>.

⁴ NCVO. (2019). *At a Glance - Time Well Spent: Employer-Supported Volunteering*. NCVO.org.uk. https://ncvo-app-wagtail-mediaa721a567-uwkfinin077j.s3.amazonaws.com/documents/time_well_spent_employer-supported_volunteering_june_2019.pdf

Key enablers to engagement in LEAP programme identified by TSIP include the offer of paid volunteering leave and a well-organised and delivered programme. However, barriers were also identified, including a need for more diverse opportunities, more team challenges, better management support, workload concerns, administrative challenges, and low awareness of the programme. This latter point aligns with industry trends, with employers being urged to do more to promote employee volunteering opportunities (Works4U 2022-23, p.15). Recommendations to address these barriers have been integrated into current and future plans (see following sections).

In addition to managing the LEAP programme, the corporate volunteering function also developed a corporation-wide approach to engaging external community volunteers, to ensure consistency in practice and minimise risk. Over 750 volunteers contribute to the Corporation's activities across its open spaces, cultural and heritage sites and community services. A working group of volunteer managers contributed to this effort, resulting in the creation and rollout of the corporate *Guidance for Managing External Volunteers* – a key document outlining the City Corporation's approach to volunteer management. This work led to the establishment of a regular Volunteer Working Group, bringing colleagues together to share best practice and tackle common challenges and goals in the volunteer management space.

The corporate volunteering function also commissioned Tempo Time Credit's *Motivators and Barriers to Volunteering in the City of London (2023)*⁵ providing useful insights into resident and business volunteering needs in the city.

In November 2023, the Corporate Volunteering Manager left the organisation, leading to a pause in the centrally managed programme whilst a replacement was recruited to the role. This allowed for strategic recommendations to transfer oversight from the Philanthropy Director to People and HR, effective mid-2024. This move acknowledges the critical role of volunteering in supporting both employee and organisational development. In addition, with external community volunteers contributing significantly to the Corporation's activities, People and HR are well-positioned to oversee this vital function.

2. Current position

A new Volunteering Manager was appointed in July 2024, based within the Learning and Organisational Development Team, to resume work and build on the successes of the previous Corporate Volunteering Strategy.

In the first four months of being in post, two key milestones have been achieved:

⁵ Tempo Time Credit's *Motivators and Barriers to Volunteering in the City of London (2023)*
<https://wearetempo.org/motivators-and-barriers-to-volunteering-city-of-london-research-summary/>

- 1) A new five-year action plan and associated KPIs have been developed. This responds to the key recommendations made by TSIP (2023), and aligns to the outcomes of the Corporate Plan, People Strategy and EEDI objectives. Goals include:
- Increasing awareness of LEAP through more internal communications and promotional activities, ensuring more employees are aware of the positive outcomes of volunteering such as enhanced wellbeing and sense of belonging, and professional and personal growth.
 - diversifying volunteering opportunities available to staff through LEAP to increase engagement in volunteering. This includes growing the number of team-volunteering opportunities to facilitate collaboration and cooperation, and developing skills-based volunteering initiatives supporting professional development.
 - engaging senior and middle managers in the professional and organisational benefits of volunteering, including development of resources to demonstrate the skills and competencies developed through different volunteering initiatives. This aims to empower leaders to encourage volunteering across all grades and utilise volunteering as a powerful development tool for improved team and individual performance.
 - streamlining processes to make it easier for employees to volunteer and for the Volunteer Manager to effectively track volunteering. This will support employee volunteer recruitment and retention and enable more effective approaches to impact measurement.

Appendix 1 sets out a full overview of the action plan, outcomes and KPIs.

- 2) The LEAP employee volunteering programme has been refreshed and was relaunched to staff in September. This is now offering 25+ individual and team centrally brokered volunteering opportunities. New internal communication materials have been developed, and an organisation-wide poster campaign was run throughout October to raise awareness. The Volunteer Manager has also promoted the programme at new-staff induction sessions and departmental meetings. Additionally, improvements have also been made to volunteer sign up and tracking processes, including simplifying the system for staff to register volunteering opportunities of their own choosing through the LEAP. This recognises that not all volunteering is currently tracked centrally through the programme and will help to improve consistency of volunteer recognition and reporting.

Engagement since the re-launch has been incredibly positive, with over 200 staff expressing an interest in volunteering, for example by signing up to the LEAP mailing list or via surveys. In addition, between September and October:

Number of new staff registered with LEAP	64
Number of staff who have signed up to a volunteering opportunity	52

Departments involved in team volunteering activities include City Surveyors, Remembrancer's, Learning & Organisation Development, the Corporation's Executive/Senior Leadership Team, and City Bridge Foundation. Collectively, these activities are expected to engage 100+ employees working with a range of organisations including Thames21, Vauxhall City Farm, and BIG Alliance/East London Business Alliance (with whom a partnership has been re-established providing volunteering brokerage with community organisations). LEAP is also collaborating with the Corporation's Climate Champions Network to promote cross-organisational volunteering events focused on environmental and bio-diversity projects within the city.

3. Next steps

In 2021 and 2022, a team of 35 volunteers were trained and successfully deployed to support City events marking the late Queen Elizabeth II Jubilee, Lord Mayor's Show, and Late Queen Elizabeth II funeral (as part of Operation London Bridge). Planning has begun for the recruitment and training of a new cadre of Royal Event Supporters to support plans for Operation London Bridge other high-profile Royal events in the city. This work will support organisational resilience and ensure that the city is supported to deliver events of international, national, and regional importance by well-trained and engaged volunteers.

The Volunteer Ways of Working Group has also been re-established, bringing together 16 staff with oversight of 750+ volunteers from across the organisation to collaborate, maximise alignment and share best practice. An initial meeting was held in October 2024 to set the terms of reference for the Group and ascertain shared priorities. These include: recruitment, onboarding, and training of volunteers.

- processes and policies for recognising the contribution of volunteers.
- developing and updating systems to increase efficiency and to effectively track engagement and impact.
- scoping the potential to develop a more consistent cross-cutting approach to engaging corporate volunteers across the organisation.

An action plan is now under development to be rolled out in the new year.

Work has also begun on the development of the City of London's external volunteering web pages responding to recommendations made by the Tempo Time Credit 2023 evaluation to showcase volunteering opportunities within the city. This will establish a clear online presence for those wishing to find out about volunteering with the City Corporation, and support volunteer recruitment by volunteer-involving departments.

The Volunteer Manager will also continue to increase awareness of the benefits of LEAP, and work closely with the Corporate Communications Team, staff diversity networks, and

colleagues in Learning and Organisational Development, to identify strategic volunteering opportunities and creative ways to engage staff. This will include collaborating with the Apprenticeships and Work Experience team to identify volunteering opportunities supportive of the social mobility objectives. In addition, a Volunteer Champions Network will be re-established in early 2025 comprising colleagues from across the organisation to ensure opportunities to raise awareness are maximised.

Key Data

To ensure that the volunteering programme delivers on the outcomes identified for volunteers, the City Corporation, stakeholders and wider community, we are strengthening our data collection systems to ensure reliable and robust data and effective programme monitoring.

Our current proposed metrics support us in getting us to where we want to be in terms of programme outcomes, and we expect these to be iterative and improve over time:

- Number of employees registered to LEAP
- Number of active employee volunteers
- Number of employee volunteer hours recorded
- % positive responses from LEAP feedback questionnaires, including metrics to demonstrate the positive impact of volunteering on employees' personal development, professional and skills development, and sense of wellbeing.
- % of positive feedback from LEAP questionnaires from volunteer involving organisations.
- CoLC Staff Survey - % increase in employee engagement
- Number and diversity of opportunities offered with partner organisations.
- Internal staff communications metrics e.g. intranet page visits

Targets for growth will be established at the year-end 2024-25, aligned to the People Strategy and Corporate Plan timelines.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

Strategic implications

As per Appendix 1 (p.1), volunteering supports five of the six Corporate Plan outcomes:

- *Diverse and engaged communities* – volunteering creates social connections, encourages inclusion, combats isolation, and empowers individuals to contribute to their communities.
- *Leading sustainable environment* – volunteers play a crucial role in sustainability initiatives such as conservation and habitat restoration, education and awareness raising, waste reduction, and community gardening.
- *Providing excellent services* – volunteering helps people to develop professionally and supports the delivery of excellent services.

- *Vibrant thriving destination* – volunteers contribute to the preservation and maintenance of our cultural heritage assets and sites, as well as supporting events of cultural and national importance.
- *Flourishing public spaces* – volunteers engage in and support a wide range of activities to ensure our public spaces are inviting and sustainable.

Financial implications

For the management and growth of the programme, the post and associated costs will require continued resourcing and executive leadership support.

Resource implications

The corporate volunteering function is currently staffed by a full-time Volunteering Manager (Grade E). With planned activity growth, additional staffing resources may be required in the future.

Legal implications

None

Risk implications

Investing in volunteering highlights our commitment to employee development, organisational growth, and social responsibility. Effective management and monitoring are crucial to mitigate risks to both individuals and the organisation. We have robust due diligence processes to ensure volunteering is safe and rewarding, including risk assessments, insurance coverage, and comprehensive training and support.

Equalities implications

Volunteering strongly supports the City Corporation's commitment to equality, diversity, and inclusion (EEDI), and fosters a culture that values diverse perspectives, enhances a sense of belonging, and strengthens connections with diverse communities.

Volunteering is open to all regardless of background, offers a variety of activities catering to different interests and abilities, and is flexible in terms of scheduling options. However, in response to the EDI evaluation of LEAP (TSIP, 2022-23), we are implementing measures to further strengthen the accessibility and diversity of the programme structure and offer. These efforts create a volunteering programme that reflects our diverse workforce and promotes inclusivity, meeting our EEDI objectives and contributing to a more equitable society.

Climate implications

Volunteering plays an important role in addressing climate change. By participating in activities such as habitat restoration and community clean-ups, volunteers directly contribute to environmental sustainability. These efforts help reduce carbon footprints, enhance biodiversity, and promote eco-friendly practices. Additionally, our Natural Environment Department and Climate Champions Network actively collaborate to promote these initiatives, ensuring our volunteering efforts align with broader environmental goals. Through these combined efforts, we are fostering a culture of

environmental stewardship within our organisation and communities, supportive of our Corporate Plan objective to create a leading sustainable environment.

Security implications

Volunteers such as the Royal Events Supporters team play a vital role in ensuring the security of high-profile events in the City of London. Their presence enhances safety measures by assisting with crowd control, providing information to visitors, and supporting emergency services. They help create a secure and well-organised environment, allowing events to run smoothly and safely, and maintaining the high standards of security required for such significant occasions.

Conclusion

The corporate volunteering function at the City Corporation has successfully developed a positive culture of volunteering, delivering benefits to employees, the wider community, and the organisation itself. Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and internal restructuring, the Corporate Volunteering Strategy (2018–2023) boosted employee engagement volunteering. Recent evaluations have highlighted the benefits of the programme, including its positive impact on community relationships, employee wellbeing, and professional development enhancing wellbeing, and support for professional development. Additionally, the corporate volunteering function has played an important role in supporting the City Corporation’s volunteer managers, who work with numerous volunteers and voluntary-sector partners, adding value to the organisation’s core operations and services.

Looking ahead, a newly appointed Volunteering Manager is building on this work with a new five-year action plan aligned with the Corporate Plan, People Strategy and Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) objectives, aimed at deepening the positive outcomes of volunteering initiatives across the City Corporation, Square Mile, London and beyond.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Volunteering Action Plan 2024-2029

Background Papers

None

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