



## Open letter to Warren Morgan, Leader of Brighton & Hove Council

This letter is signed by 9 organisations who provide backing to hundreds of community and voluntary groups in the city. From playgroups to food banks, youth clubs to lunch clubs, community and voluntary groups play a hugely important part in preventing loneliness, relieving poverty and helping the most vulnerable members of our communities to feel supported. These groups make a vital difference in their neighbourhoods and communities by organising activities that bring people together to support each other.



At the Council's invitation, our organisations submitted a joint bid to provide the backing groups need. We put together a service plan that would offer a high-quality, well-designed service to hundreds of groups. We prepared the plan following detailed discussions with council officers, to ensure support to groups will be delivered effectively and cost efficiently. Many other organisations in the city also submitted partnership bids for a wide range of activities identified by the council as strategic priorities for funding.



We are delighted that we were successful in our bid and that the Council recognises the value of our support offer. We celebrate the Council's ongoing commitment to the Third Sector Investment Programme and the funding awards it is making to 26 VCS partnerships in the city who are working to meet council strategic priorities. The £1.8mn Third Sector Investment Programme:

- Enables ongoing service provision and support to vulnerable people at a critical time.
- Has resulted in joined up conversations between commissioners within the Council which can further develop how the Council relates to voluntary groups.
- Has been designed by officers to achieve strategic objectives around strengthening collaboration between providers and achieving efficiencies. Partnerships have been formed which will move organisations towards financial independence and sustainability over the three years of the programme, while allowing them to maintain individual specialisms, reach, community ownership and crucially their capacity to lever in external funding.



The additional 18% cut which the Council is proposing to take to the funding available for this work, on top of the reduction already built into the programme, is however disappointing and short-sighted. It risks not getting maximum value from the work and undermines the strategic preparation undertaken by officers and organisations to align the programme with the Administration's priorities, which we're all working hard to support. Whether to front line services or to the support, development and engagement services we offer, the cut will have severe negative effects across the city, which the council acknowledges as a risk in the budget papers. It could increase demand on the Council's own overstretched services and result in less active citizenship in neighbourhoods and communities. We believe that these are not risks but certainties:



- a) Our public services, such as schools and parks, are increasingly dependent on the activities of volunteer groups to function properly, due to cuts in funding. The 'friends of' groups that run many local resources are successful because volunteers give their time freely, but they rely on outside help for a range of their activities. Cutting that help would have the immediate effect of weakening these groups and the services they are supporting.
- b) Many of the groups we support enable the most vulnerable or marginalised people in the city to connect with others in their communities. If this early, preventative work is weakened, the knock-on effects will be costly in both financial and human terms. If the neighbourhood infrastructure supporting communities is lost, it will be impossible to achieve Labour's neighbourhood vision.
- c) We offer groups help with fundraising which brings hundreds of thousands of pounds into the city. Removing this help would inevitably reduce the amount that groups are able to raise.



We recognise the difficult financial position the Council is in and have done our best to work in partnership with you for the good of the city. However, current proposals threaten all that our partnership aims to achieve and will become ultimately and significantly more costly to the Council in the immediate and longer-term future. We urge you to reconsider ahead of final budget proposals being published later this month. If we can provide any information to help in this regard, please let us know.



Signed (in alphabetical order)

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|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|
| • Clare Project                | • Community Works                  | • Friends, Families and Travellers           |
| • Hangleton & Knoll Project    | • Resource Centre                  | • Serendipity                                |
| • Sussex Interpreting Services | • Trust for Developing Communities | • Working to Connect (LGBT Community Groups) |

