

Brighton & Hove City Council 16/17 Budget Proposals: Position statement

(January 2016-V4)

INTRODUCTION

This Position Statement presents the views of our members in response to the Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) budget proposals for 2016/17. It's based on contributions from our members, analysis of the budget proposals by our reps and consultation events on the Equalities Impact Assessments (EIAs) which accompany the proposals.

1. POSITIVE NEWS

- The budget proposals make some bold commitments around modernisation, developing alternative service delivery models and furthering partnership working to achieve change (p2 and p20-21). We welcome this shift in thinking and the opportunity to work collaboratively to achieve these aspirations.
- **Assistant Chief Executive/Grants Programme** (p135). We welcome the protection of the BHCC grants programme. It demonstrates a clear policy and financial commitment to the VCS. It's important to note a £165k gap in the grants budget, the result of a saving taken in 2014 which has been plugged with one-off monies.
- **Assistant Chief Executive/Communities and Third Sector Development Commission** (p134). We welcome the protection of the infrastructure, community development and engagement prospectus in 16/17. It allows the contract to complete and for support to the VCS to be maintained. Pooling and aligning this budget and the grants programme with the emerging Fairness Commission priorities in May 2016 makes good strategic sense.
- **Children's Services/Youth Service Integrated Support Service for 13-19ys** (p68). The commitment to implementing the recommendations of the Youth Services Review is welcomed as is recognition of the long-term role of VCS service provision.
- **Housing Related Support**. Having taken £2m out of services already, it is welcome that the commitment to take no more savings is being honoured until 19/20.
- **Housing Options and Housing Support savings** (p92-93). The redesign could provide helpful efficiencies and improvements to a sometimes variable service. However, care must be taken to ensure that any reduction in staffing must not impact negatively on the quality or turnaround of referrals.
- We consider that **public health** has redefined itself well in the local authority context and is providing leadership around understanding the benefit of and investing in preventative services.

DEVELOPING THE BUDGET PROPOSALS

Since the draft budget proposals were published in December some amendments have already been made as a result of dialogue with the VCS. This responsiveness is welcomed.

Cllr Daniels' monthly surgeries have provided the VCS with a useful opportunity to discuss their concerns and ideas, 1:1 with the Administration.

2. FURTHER INFORMATION NEEDED

- The budget proposals do not provide enough information on their own to understand how aspirations will be achieved at the scale and pace required. Are there **more detailed written plans** behind the budget proposals which could be shared?
- **Adult Social Care** states that savings are only possible with a 'robust and comprehensive preventative approach' and by pushing service users out to 'use community resources', by 'managing demand' and 'moving clients on' (EIA 4). However, there is little clarity as to what kind of 'community resources' are needed or available for 'moving people on', or how they are funded, how sustainable they are and how they will cope with increases in demand. We feel BHCC has been thinking about savings in terms of redesign/recommissioning services and reducing staffing levels, but not about preventative work and how to make it happen.
- Commissioning services 'that support **independence and personal control**' are a key aspect of how Adult Social Care hopes to achieve savings (p29). We're concerned that strategies to date around personalisation haven't delivered the savings anticipated, yet it continues to be relied on as a solution. Similarly, assuming savings will be made through forcing a reduction in caseloads may not be realistic. It may create backlogs and risks more crisis and worse outcomes.
- We would like to know about the impact of **Children's Services Early Help interventions**. Are children in need cases being reviewed to ensure they are being properly processed and there is a good understanding of cases in the system? Can this learning be shared with the VCS?
- We are concerned that on paper the **Communities and Equalities Team** appears to be being totally cut (p133). Given the emphasis in the budget around working closely with communities, we seek reassurance that the functions of this team will continue.

BETTER COMMUNICATION IS NEEDED

- In recent years, budget proposals have committed to protecting frontline services. It's important it's clear and upfront that this is no longer possible.
- There are inconsistencies between budget reductions which look significant and EIA statements that 'there will be no impact'. This kind of statement is unhelpful and where used needs further explanation.
- There needs to be a clear and strong commitment to dialogue with those affected by budget reductions to ensure that service users and communities are supported during the transition. We have identified examples of poor communication around budget proposals and the proposals give limited information on how this is being handled.
- The EIA engagement events with service leads provided limited opportunity for dialogue and it underlined the scale of the challenge and task ahead in terms of cultural change needed for BHCC to collaborate effectively with the VCS.
- The EIAs themselves were generally disappointing in their lack of analysis and consideration of equality issues.
- There isn't a formal scrutiny process around the budget proposals which is a change from previous years. We've presented detail in this report, in the hope it provides a route for the VCS to ask questions and for BHCC to respond.

3. SPECIFIC SERVICE QUESTIONS AND CONCERNS

Adult social care

- Proposals relating to the **Learning Disability Employment Support Service** are unclear (p36). Is the support service which helps people with a learning disability (PWLD) find employment or the Able and Willing Service (which directly employs a limited number of PWLD) that will be reduced? The support service has a greater impact and reach than the Able and Willing Service and should be protected. The Better Futures programme, led by B&H Impetus and funded by the Big Lottery, provides associated support for people with additional needs to access volunteering and is seeking continuation funding currently. It may be in a position to support this area in future.
- Retention of the internal **BHCC Shared Lives** service (p37) isn't strategic in the context of outsourcing and redesigning other Learning Disability services and the reasons behind why it is considered better value for money are felt to be contestable.
- How the £34k **Learning Disability Partnership Fund** (p45) saving will be taken is unclear. VCS partners provide engagement and consultation via advocacy groups and activities and services which connect PWLD to their communities. The impact on users is therefore unclear and could be counter-productive if they increase costs elsewhere. Providers need to be able to plan how to reconfigure their services and staffing accordingly and with adequate notice.
- Adults Assessment budget proposals** (p27-30) are identical across the various service areas, (30% reduction in budget and the same text is used to describe what will happen). This causes concerns as to whether change and the impact of change has been properly considered. What systems and quality assurances are being put in place to ensure that externalising assessment and use of unqualified staff does not impact negatively on the service and on service users?
- Information Signposting Triage, Financial Assessments and Welfare Rights and Care Matching Team** (p31). It is unclear what 'externalise welfare rights functions' means. In terms of potential impact of reductions in service, the welfare rights team currently provide specialist capacity-building training that is free at the point of

THE BUDGET ENVELOPE

- The opportunity presented by the 2% Adult Social Care precept should be taken up to maximise the budget envelope available to BHCC.
- Creative use of the Housing Revenue Account budget to support activities in areas of council-owned housing for community benefit should be maintained.

THE FAIRNESS COMMISSION

Whilst four year planning and a longer term strategy is welcomed, it's important that BHCC's finances remain flexible to respond to the emerging findings of the Fairness Commission. The commission's recommendations are expected to inform the Labour Administration's future policy and investment priorities.

access to VCS advice organisations. This training enables frontline staff and volunteers in these organisations to keep up to date with the complexities of the welfare reform programme and, thereby, provide appropriate and effective advice and support to residents. Currently, this training is complimented by a VCS lottery funded programme which ends in March 2016. The welfare rights team also provides direct advice and casework to a number of clients that might otherwise present at VCS organisations for support.

Children's services

- **Children's social work staffing** (p53) is being significantly reduced especially in years 2-4 based on a predicted reduction in demand. **Youth offending** (p58) predicts numbers of young people offending will decrease as a result of the youth offending strategy. Is information available on how the new social work relationship pod system will provide savings (no EIA was provided here), and can the youth offending strategy be shared?
- **Children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), residential, respite and short breaks** (p61). There are a proposed £86k of savings from across VCS contracts by recommissioning in year 1 and a further £166k in years 2-4, yet the EIA on p26 says these changes will have no impact on the overall services. Can we have details on how these savings will be made without impacting on the services and service users?
- **Social work for SEND** (p61). We have a number of specific questions:
 - Is the £50k saving in year 1 a management post? What is the £350k in years 2-4, for?
 - What will the impact be on the transitions team?
 - How much one-to-one funding will be available to support under 5s with SEND to be included in local, mainstream provision?
 - How much SEND training will be available to nurseries?
- A £1.1m saving is identified from moving towards the **new integrated provision** model which puts health, social care and education services together. We had understood that savings made here would be ringfenced and reinvested in the new provision hubs model for CYP with SEND. Will this no longer happen?
- **Residential fostering for disabled CYP** (p62). The proposals suggest there will be a downward trend in terms of demand. Can we see the evidence behind this prediction?
- **Special Educational Needs agency disability** (p63). We've assumed the saving of £40k is a SEN caseworker post. This raises concern that most nurseries will be left unsupported by qualified professionals or SEND specialists. Can BHCC commit to retaining an early years specialism in the new service?
- **CAMHS and emotional health and wellbeing** (p63). What impact will the shift in funding to DSG have on protecting frontline services, both for now and in the services longer-term?
- **Home to school transport** (p65). The proposal suggests introducing a charging policy to provide income for the service. Who do BHCC intend to charge? BHCC have a statutory duty to provide transport to eligible CYP with SEND so who would be paying? Is the £200k saving /income identified for years 2-4 a gradual increase over the

3 years or estimated £70k per year? Has the administration cost of receiving payments been accounted for?

This proposal needs an EIA.

- **Early years Nurseries** (p70). With regards free education to 2 year olds, there is currently high take-up by vulnerable family's getting Disability Living Allowance (DLA) as the free childcare system is promoted by Amaze's DLA project. This is facing a cut so there may be a risk to the take up of free childcare as fewer families will access DLA. We are also concerned that many nurseries will be left without support by qualified professionals.

Housing, transport, environment and public health

- **Housing adaptations** (p96). The £153k saving is concerning given the proposals state it delivers significant cost benefits for both health and social care and children's services.
- **Supported bus services** (p118). The proposed reduction of supported bus services will isolate people in affected neighbourhoods and reduce opportunities to grow services which may become commercially viable in the longer term eg improved links from the Deans to Falmer and the city centre. We support the suggestion by Brighton Buswatch that BHCC should work with the bus operators to find alternative sources of finance such as from the universities and other businesses, which can generate a lot of bus users, to support and improve some routes.
- **Concessionary Bus Fares for older and disabled people** (p45). The proposed reduction in the discretionary hours for concessionary bus passes (from 9.00am–4.00am to 9.30am-11.00pm) could have a negative impact on many bus users including up to 39,500 older people and 5,839 people with disabilities. Losing half an hour in the morning is particularly problematic eg for PWLD who need to get to their places of work and to voluntary placements at that time, and for people who need to travel to medical appointments, social activities or who have caring responsibilities.
- **Environmental Protection** (p178). Reducing the noise complaints service is a very high risk strategy, with over 3,000 complaints received. Are there alternative strategies?
- **HIV prevention sexual health** (p163). Cuts to these services may have a detrimental impact and result in increased HIV rates. This is an area where communication with service providers and planning for service transition has been minimal.
- The Fareshare grant from **Public Health** (p173) finishes in March 2017 and it is expected they will be asked to requote. This funding covers some running costs that enable Fareshare to get food redistributed to projects working with vulnerable people eg lunch clubs and food banks. It's vital that this service continues and if any changes do go ahead than a robust EIA is undertaken.

4. IDEAS TO BE FURTHER DISCUSSED AND DEVELOPED

- With pressure to take money out of the system, **effective commissioning** is even more under the spotlight. Adult Social Care needs to have a strong focus on commissioning for social value and champion this approach within BHCC. That way, BHCC can ensure the greatest value is delivered from the investments it makes.
- There is concern amongst medium to larger VCS organisations that the market eg for **community care** for PWLD, is on the brink of collapse. Contract prices have reduced significantly in recent years from £19.50 per hour 6 years ago to £15.00 per hour now for some community care. This is undermining the market to the extent that it is becoming impossible for providers to deliver. There are examples of VCS and private sector providers handing back contracts and pulling out of service delivery. A crisis in community care standing conference will soon take place on this subject in West Sussex, where providers and commissioners are further ahead in talking about the issues and identifying solutions. A stronger collaborative approach to these issues is required in Brighton & Hove. It can't be assumed that the market will pick up. It needs to be discussed how BHCC can work with providers on transfer and around appropriate risk sharing eg of TUPE costs.
- Services around the city have been asked to find PWLD who are deemed 'over provided' so they can be moved to something with less support ('**Moving On**' project). This work is stretching capacity to provide quality and meaningful advocacy. Such an approach needs to be properly resourced if clients are to be moved on successfully so that such savings can be realised.
- The impact of the **Better Care Fund** and the **Care Act** on PWLD is unclear. There is little clarity on how PWLD will be supported to take up Personal Health Budgets. VCS organisations are keen to help make progress with those people eligible for this service. Although the Care Act assumes there will be an increase in demand for services by PWLD because of changing eligibility and entitlements, it is reported that this hasn't materialised. This suggests assessment processes are not referring people through as they should be.
- EIA 2, proposes outsourcing and 'externalising' **adult social care assessment** for lower level needs. There is a potential role for the VCS here in supporting assessments, but this will still need to be resourced.
- P50 proposes **preventative children's services** work more closely with schools. This should be extended to community and youth projects too, as many of the children and young people who need to be engaged in preventative activity may not attend school.
- Work in **Early Years and Children's Centres** is widely recognised for its preventative value and any cuts to this area may increase costs for the city further down the line. We're concerned about the cumulative effect of cuts across the 0-5 age range. Especially with regards to children with SEN where cuts to children's centres, educational psychology, learning support services and the standards and achievement team are all going to have a significant impact.
- **Family support services** (p62). We understood that savings made from reconfiguring the BHCC outreach team would be redirected into direct payments (DPs) pot. Will this still happen? We note the vision to continue to

increase choice and control for families with disabled children, by increasing the availability of personal budgets (and thus DPs). This will require a wholesale look at how to shift funding from direct service provision into more direct payments. It will require seed investment to generate innovation and support for families to test pooling budgets and purchasing short breaks activities collectively, as well as provision of more advice and support to manage personal budgets and development of the market of personal assistants (PAs).

- **Children's Centres** (p69). We're concerned that a reduction in the number of designated Children's Centres will have a disproportional effect for children across the city depending on the neighbourhoods they live in. Reductions in universal groups in children's centres and other community venues could seriously jeopardise the important preventative work that is carried out in them. Families will have fewer places for support, to observe good play and parenting practice and to socialise. Some will inevitably need a more expensive and time-consuming resource-heavy intervention later on if they are unable to attend groups because the groups have been cut. Evidence shows that effective transformations in parenting are based on a transfer of knowledge and experience. Any model for children's centre volunteering should take this into account.
- **Play service** (p68). What alternative funding sources are being looked at to sustain and transfer this service, and to find it a sustainable future? Can we support this process?
- **Reductions to public conveniences** (p81). We're concerned about the closure of further public toilets in addition to the many closures during recent years eg for PWLD this may undermine their freedom to access the city confidently and the lack of provision disproportionately affects disabled and older people. Many families with disabled children say they don't go out because of the fear of their child needing the toilet. There are already insufficient appropriate 'Changing Places' toilets. One suggested solution is to work with businesses and other organisations to open up their facilities for public use or at least for use by those in particular need. We welcome proposals to explore adopting the 'Use Our Loo' and 'Can't Wait' schemes. In West Sussex they are trialling all GP surgeries joining such schemes too.
- **Toilet provision in parks** (EIA 15). The proposal of 'park cafes looking after toilet provision' is challenging for community groups running cafes in parks. B&H Food Partnership have highlighted that the cost of the water bills and issues with being able to see who is entering the toilets to prevent anti-social behaviour is hard for community-run cafes such as in Stoneham Park. Toilets in parks can however enable participation in community activities and their absence can lead to the exclusion of certain groups. If BHCC want more volunteers to run services they need basic infrastructure like toilets. In Saunders Park the empty cafe has meant no toilets, which has undermined progress on the community garden. The group running the community garden have requested access to the toilet and this has so far not been forthcoming.
- **New delivery models for parks and open spaces** (p82). Friends of parks groups are key local stakeholders in many parks across the city and they have not been adequately engaged in developing these plans. Whilst the groups vary considerably in terms of capacity, many can provide a direct link to local communities and to sourcing motivated and committed volunteers to help care for parks. Through meaningful engagement, BHCC

could determine which groups are interested in and able to support new delivery models, and which aren't. The EIA on this area doesn't describe many of the potential impacts such as loss of management and wildlife, potential loss of local designations, loss of infrastructure such as steps leading to dangerous paths, increased litter and general lack of maintenance resulting in reduced use. It's important to be upfront around impact if change is to be well managed and plans for development effective.

- **Reduction of Park Ranger Service** (p82-83). We're concerned about proposals to reduce the number of rangers from 9 to 3 and the impact this will have on open spaces, wildlife and community involvement. There is an inconsistency between these reductions and the city's recent UNESCO 'Biosphere Reserve' status and a commitment to promoting biodiversity. BHCC's website says 'Cityparks rangers ensure everyone enjoys our public open spaces safely'. The new proposed post which will focus on volunteer co-ordination, should be aware of and sensitive to the role of Friends of groups in this area.
- **Economic Development Business support** (p87-88). Economic development is not subject to a significant saving, however, has it been considered if BHCC is best placed to deliver on business support to the business sector? Could this service be better outsourced eg to the Chamber of Commerce?
- **Road Safety and Education** (p117). Schools should be required to contribute or cover costs associated with road safety around their sites.
- **Libraries and Community Hubs resource** (p148). This is an area where detailed plans are lacking and where the VCS could support and help to integrate better. We welcome any innovative approach to redesigning services.
- **Neighbourhood liaison** (p186). Retaining 0.6FTE post for this type of activity is not strategic. This resource could be more effectively deployed elsewhere, as it will not be impossible to meet demand on such a reduced capacity.
- **Council tax reduction scheme** (p202, EIA 42). Any reduction in this scheme will impact on low income households and groups identified as most at risk eg of food poverty. The recently adopted food poverty action plan outlines the need for action to ensure that households have a basic level of income to prevent people from experiencing food poverty because of the impact on their health and wellbeing, and the long term impact on health and social care budgets.
- **Discretionary Rate Relief for not for profit organisations** (p201). It's proposed a £69k saving is taken from 2017/18 by being more stringent in the awarding of DRR. There is commitment to consult on how this goes forward, which process we are keen to discuss with BHCC.

5. EXAMPLES OF THE IMPACTS

Changes to services for People with Learning Disabilities (PWLD)

There isn't opposition in principle to changes in Learning Disability services (eg modernising day options and changing residential care). But we are concerned about ensuring people are supported during transition and that their wellbeing and safety are maintained. Some examples of this include:

- PWLD are fearful that their services will diminish and they won't get the support they need. The Budget EIA document does not sufficiently indicate what the impacts are, or indicate the numbers involved or how the changes might be felt by those affected. For example 'The recalibration of the RAS' is not simply a change in a calculation, it is a reduction in money to service users and the impact will not just be 'a perceived loss in service', it *will* be a loss. Nearly everyone will lose some services, not all their services, but everyone will be affected.
- We're concerned that there won't be clear ways to monitor and evaluate the changes to services that PWLD face. Annual reviews are cited as a way to check, monitor and evaluate services in point 9 of EIAs 1, 2 and 4. PWLD are meant to get annual reviews but at present many don't.
- We're concerned that as services decentralise from day services to more individual support and as BHCC accommodation is outsourced that PWLD might be at risk of poor quality support or at worst safeguarding issues, and not know where to turn if this is the case as at the moment day services do provide a safety net. Reassurances are needed that the quality of care will not deteriorate if contracts are taken up by the private sector in particular. While some services are excellent or satisfactory others can be outdated and not good at providing PWLD with choice, control or a range of experiences and opportunities.
- When care packages are reassessed and services change, it can be with short and unreasonable notice and some people are being left unsupported. There are examples where PWLD in residential care have been told with one week's notice that their entitlement to day activity is being cut, and they have not been referred to any service which enables them to seek redress or which gives them guidance on alternative options. These service users have been assessed as 'capable' which means they aren't eligible for advocacy support, however, many in reality aren't because they have lived in the same institution for 50+ years.

St Johns' Day Services (p43)

Is facing a £29k cut which will result in a reduction in frontline services. The full impact of this is not yet clear as dialogue with the service provider is still pending. Changes may include a reduced outreach offer in Coldean and to sheltered housing schemes, that the service no longer being available 7 days per week or the PWLD targeted service ends. The service has already made significant savings in recent years and been redesigned. It is providing a

service to people who do not and will not take up personal budgets or direct payments, and is meeting high end need and providing emotional and physical support to 650+ people.

Mental Health Preventative contracts (p44-45) are being required to find potential 10% savings using a contract review process. This may or may not be achievable for service providers and joint commissioning with the Clinical Commissioning Group maybe affected. The process for making the savings is unclear.

The community meals service is being redesigned and recommissioned and there are proposals to reduce the **community nutrition/healthy weight** work delivered by Albion in the Community and the B&H Food Partnership by £63k in 2017/18 (p173). Its hard to comment on the implications of this until the detail of these plans emerge but the Food Poverty Action Plan specifies a commitment that the most vulnerable to food poverty listed in the plan eg older people, disabled people, people experiencing ill health, vulnerable adults – especially single older men, would be prioritised for ongoing support. EIAs which fully explore the issues are needed to mitigate the impact and consequences of malnutrition, along with a thorough understanding of why the meal service may or may not be being accessed.