

Brighton & Hove City Council 2019/20 Budget Proposals: Position Statement

(February 2019)

1. Introduction

This Position Statement presents our response to the Brighton & Hove City Council (BHCC) budget proposals for 2019/20. We understand the challenge in meeting the savings requirement of over £12m for 2019/2020 and were pleased to see an overall commitment to supporting the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS). We maintain our strong commitment to working in partnership to find mutually beneficial solutions. We recognise the very difficult position that BHCC will face when setting the budget for 2020/21 with a current projected budget gap of £9.14m and would be happy to try and facilitate the exploration of solutions and thinking through of the proposed decisions with the VCS before the budget is set.

All page numbers in this paper relate to the Policy, Resources and Growth meeting pack for the meeting on 14 February 2019 on this BHCC website link: <https://bit.ly/2GzD8EB>

2. Overarching positive comments

- We appreciate the work being carried out by Officers and Members to preserve funding to the VCS where possible. The presence of the VCS as a key partner in many of the mitigating activities within the EIA's (p.231-320) demonstrates where the sector is a partner in prevention and in supporting BHCC to resolve challenges
- We would particularly highlight:
 - the continued commitment to the Third Sector Investment Programme (TSIP),
 - the investment in the Community Banking Partnership and East Sussex Credit Union to support residents affected by welfare reforms, and
 - the support shown in removing proposed reductions for Reducing Violence against Women and Girls (originally featured in the draft Revenue and Capital Strategy 2019/2020 presented at the Policy, Resources and Growth Committee on 6 December 2018)
- The continued emphasis within the papers on joint commissioning by BHCC and B&H Clinical Commissioning Group (BHCCG) is noted. Our members are keen to participate in discussions about how the joint commissioning process operates and how decisions are taken locally in light of the changing structures across the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership area. We look forward to continuing to build on positive commissioning practise and evolve partnership working with members and officers.

3. Overarching points of concern

- Whilst we appreciate the commitment to integrated working and joint commissioning it is difficult to fully understand the full impact of budget proposals without a clear outline of the proposed funding reductions being suggested by BHCCG as a joint funder. The impact of BHCCG funding reductions is mentioned within the papers but we would appreciate further clarity about the contributory impact of any BHCCG reductions on the VCS.
- We note the changes in governance structures within health and its considerable implications for BHCC and the VCS. We would like to support both BHCC and BHCCG in the development of integration to preserve VCS expertise contributing to the development.

- Community Works members remain concerned about business rate changes and any subsequent impact upon discretionary rate relief and we are working with BHCC on this challenge given that funded providers could struggle to cover core costs for rate relief and therefore frontline delivery may be impacted by the need to manage budgets in order to cover this expense.

4. Families, Children's and Learning Directorate Proposals

- There have been concerns raised over the proposals regarding a proposed saving of £140,000 to Residential, respite and short breaks and other savings within this Directorate p.81. The Parent Carers Council produced an in depth [response](#) to all of these proposals with their recommendations.

5. Health and ASC Directorate Proposals

- Proposed reductions in funding from commissioned programmes such as Ageing Well & Mental Health Support (p.99-101). Whilst the EIA's for these proposals (EIA13 p. 268, EIA 16 p.275, EIA 17 p.278 & EIA18 p.280) suggest efficiencies through savings on multiple contracts being brought together into single programmes, there are increased costs to providers in setting up and delivering new partnerships which are not reflected within the EIA's but which commissioning practice should acknowledge. Maintaining partnership working whilst delivering outcomes is a strength of the VCS but should not be underestimated.
- The proposal from VCS providers to mitigate the reduction suggested for the Healthy Neighbourhood Fund (p.100) is that Members consider using any unspent Community Budget money to offset reductions in the HNF so that small community groups can apply for up to £500 for projects based on resident led health improvement priorities delivered in wards.

6. Environment, Economy and Culture

- We welcome the expressed commitment to working with partners, communities and businesses to find solutions to the challenges faced (p.103). The VCS is a key partner in generating creative and innovative solutions and would welcome ongoing involvement in this area of work. The preservation of the natural environment and consideration around impact of the built environment are key to the development of the city.

7. Neighbourhoods, Communities and Housing

- We recognise the stated intention throughout that staffing reductions within this directorate will not impact on the quality of relationships or delivery. We also appreciate the support demonstrated for the VCS via the continuation of TSIP funding. A proposal regarding the Healthy Neighbourhood Fund is featured in Health and Adult Social Care above as it forms part of the TSIP programme and the comments earlier regarding BHCCG funding as a contributing funder to the TSIP fund should also be considered here.

8. Finance and Resources

- The Risks identified in savings proposed across this Directorate are noted and items relating to universal credit are of particular interest given the investment in the Community Banking Partnership and other providers to support residents with the impact of welfare reforms and other related proposed allocations detailed (p.41).

Thank you for taking the time to read this position statement. If you have any questions or would like to discuss anything further please contact our CEO Jess Sumner ceo@bhcommunityworks.org.uk