

**Title:** Launch of Brighton and Hove Community Works

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**Purpose/Key Messages:** To inform the B&HSP about changes to support services for the voluntary and community sector in the city. To also receive initial findings from Taking Account 3: economic and social audit of the sector.

**Significance to BHSP and Delivering SCS outcomes:** The voluntary and community sector is a key partner in delivering against the SCS outcomes. This report serves to remind partners of the sector's contribution and build understanding around how partners might engage with the sector via Community Works.

**What is BHSP being asked to do?** Make contact with Brighton and Hove Community Works in our new home at Community Base!  
Consider what we can do for you and what you can do for the voluntary and community sector and the communities we serve.

**Next steps and report back mechanism:** The full Taking Account #3 report will be available in the new year, including impact case studies. This will be disseminated to all LSP members.  
Community Works elected representatives will be joining the LSP in the new year, following their formal induction onto the Community Works Sector Leaders Council in late December. With many thanks to the outgoing CVSF reps sat around the LSP table.

### **Introduction**

If all goes according to plan, on 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013 CVSF will cease to exist as a charitable company. In its place, with the Volunteer Centre, Skills Exchange and the Performance Development Service, Brighton and Hove Community Works will be born.

This new Brighton-based organisation will be unveiled on 27<sup>th</sup> November, so its visual brand is under wraps until then, but this will be shared with LSP members at the December meeting.

## **A reminder of the voluntary and community sector in Brighton & Hove**

Brighton & Hove has at least 1,600 community groups and voluntary organisations, providing at least seven per cent of the city's employed positions. The sector also maintains an estimated 19,200 volunteer positions in the city, donating 57,600 hours per week: equivalent to an estimated salary of £24.7m. The sector contributes an estimated £96.2m to the city, annually.

*These figures date from 2008 and are currently being refreshed in the Taking Account #3 audit of the sector (also embargoed until 27<sup>th</sup> November 2013. Initial findings will be shared at the LSP meeting).*

This voluntary and community action effectively and efficiently addresses the most significant challenges facing Brighton & Hove, including in the areas of:

- Employment and economic development
- Learning and education
- Children and young people
- Culture and tourism
- Crime and safety
- Health and wellbeing
- Housing
- Living within environmental limits and enhancing the environment.

Brighton & Hove is fortunate in having a large, diverse and active voluntary and community sector, developed over a number of years. The sector has a significant role to play locally, for example, in facilitating community engagement and fostering active citizenship and many organisations are involved in providing high quality public services.

Changes in the external environment, particularly around commissioning structures, are presenting many significant challenges to groups currently. To ensure that the city's 1,600 groups continue to thrive and provide unique services to local people, the sector requires ongoing support and must be proactive in adapting to change and in seeking to secure a sustainable future.

Writing in The Guardian (27<sup>th</sup> September 2013), Joe Irvin, Chief Executive of NAVCA, said

*"Infrastructure is often undervalued, but it is nevertheless essential. The importance of infrastructure in the form of road, rail or broadband is well understood – but voluntary organisations also need infrastructure. Without this they are like cars without roads, trains without tracks, smartphones with no signal. Trade unions have the TUC and trades councils, businesses have the CBI and*

*Chambers of Commerce; even the churches are organised in diocese”.*

Brighton & Hove's community groups and voluntary organisations benefit from support from a diverse range of specialist support organisations. Providing co-ordinated support to community groups and voluntary organisations helps them meet people's needs as effectively as possible, and ensures the voices of groups and organisations are heard so that their achievements are recognised and supported.

The Transforming Local Infrastructure project<sup>1</sup> united four partners<sup>2</sup>, that each provided support to the full range of groups and organisations, to form a new organisation, Community Works, with a mandate to lead infrastructure support in the city and the capacity to address long-standing gaps in support provision. The project also strengthened relationships between support providers to ensure that community groups and voluntary organisations receive joined-up, coherent support.

### **An overview of Brighton and Hove Community Works**

Community and voluntary action has the potential to make Brighton and Hove a better place for everyone. We want to make sure it does. This means putting in place the support and networks that enable every organisation and individual to most effectively contribute their time, expertise and energy towards making our city stronger and fairer.

We give voluntary organisations and community groups the support and platform they need to make as big a difference as possible to local lives and issues. This can be everything from helping them with the running of their organisation to ensuring that their needs and views are represented at a local, regional and national level. Anything that strengthens their work and amplifies their voice.

We help individuals who want to volunteer their time locally find opportunities that make the most of their abilities and ambitions. This is done through our Volunteer Centre – a one-stop-shop that helps people find meaningful ways to contribute their time, skills and energy with local voluntary and community groups and other initiatives across the city.

We believe a strong city is one in which everyone is working together for the good of local people. That's why we connect local businesses

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<sup>1</sup> Which ran from April 2012 to September 2013.

<sup>2</sup> Brighton & Hove Community & Voluntary Sector Forum, the Volunteer Centre Brighton & Hove, the Skills Exchange and the Performance Development Service.

with local organisations so they can both benefit from each other's expertise and networks. And we ensure that public sector organisations have the interests and advancement of the community and voluntary movement at heart.

It's by working collaboratively and imaginatively in this way that we can create a city we can all be proud of and in which everyone can thrive.

Community Works services to community groups and voluntary organisations can be summarised as follows:

- Bespoke support including:
  - drop-in and telephone support on a variety of issues relating to running a group or organisation
  - a diagnostic, health check and quality assurance service
  - consultancy support on a variety of issues relating to running a group or organisation
  - a "read a funding bid" service for small groups
  - supporting groups to access the Health Improvement Micro-Finance Fund
- Supporting organisations to form consortia and bid jointly for service delivery contracts
- Publishing good practice advice, disseminating information and signposting groups and organisations to other support providers
- Enabling groups and organisations to share good practice and learn from each other through networks, mentoring, and facilitated peer learning/action learning sets
- Developing, coordinating and brokering corporate sector volunteering and brokering other resources from the corporate sector
- Face-to-face, telephone and online volunteer brokerage, including bespoke brokerage for volunteers with additional support needs
- Providing training directly and in partnership
- Supporting and enabling the community and voluntary sector to influence the statutory sector, including through the Sector Leaders' Council and sector representation on strategic partnerships.

Community Works is underpinned by a commitment to achieving the highest possible standards of accessibility, valuing community and community activity, transparency, quality, impartiality, accountability, value for money, empowerment, recognition of the value of diversity of provision, and sustainability.

Its goals are:

1. To develop and strengthen community and voluntary groups and organisations to survive and thrive.
2. To build a strong, vibrant base for volunteering and voluntary activity.
3. To improve equalities practice within the community and voluntary sector and throughout the city.
4. To promote and support influential, effective partnerships within the community and voluntary sector, and between the community and voluntary sector, statutory sector and corporate sector.
5. To develop Community Works as an effective, efficient and sustainable organisation.

Community Works has a robust core of 8.6FTE staff and a team of volunteers. In addition, to enable it to expand and contract in response to funding availability and income generation opportunities, it works with other support providers and uses associate consultants and trainers.

For further information on Community Works, please contact Sally Polanski, CEO, [sally@bhcommunityworks.org.uk](mailto:sally@bhcommunityworks.org.uk) 01273 234023.