

Title:	Transforming Local Infrastructure
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Purpose:	To update the Brighton & Hove Strategic Partnership on progress on the Big Lottery's 'Transforming Local Infrastructure' bid

1. Background

The Office for Civil Society (via the Big Lottery) has made up to £30 million available in short-term funding, to provide better support for front line community and voluntary organisations by transforming local infrastructure services. The 'Transforming Local Infrastructure Fund' will fund partnerships of local infrastructure organisations to rationalise and transform the support services which they provide. The fund was announced in late summer 2011 with final applications being made on 31 October 2011.

In Brighton and Hove a 'Transforming Local Infrastructure (TLI) Partnership' made up of the following local infrastructure organisations came together to submit a bid:

- Brighton and Hove Community and Voluntary Sector Forum (CVSF)
- Volunteer Centre Brighton and Hove (VCBH)
- Impetus
- South East Wellbeing Consortium (SEWC)
- The Business Community Partnership (BCP)
- The Trust for Developing Communities (TDC)
- Working Together Project (WTP)

The partnership is also supported by the following collaborative partners:

- Black Minority Ethnic Community Partnership (BMECP)
- Care Co-ops
- Community Base
- Community University Partnership Project (CUPP)
- People Can (formerly known as Novas Scarman)
- Resource Centre
- Sussex Community Foundation

2. Success

It was announced in early February that the TLI Partnership in Brighton and Hove had been successful in its bid to the Big Lottery and will receive just over £300,000 between April 2012 and October 2013 to undertake a project to transform local support services to grassroots groups, charities and other not-for-profit organisations in the city. Brighton and Hove City Council have also agreed to contribute £50,000 to support the transformation, and the TLI partnership has received support from the Clinical Commissioning Group, East Sussex and Fire Rescue Service and from local business.

3. Aim of the Transforming Local Infrastructure project

The organisations in the TLI partnership will now embark on a project to explore the potential for merging a number of services which are currently provided by different organisations, into one single support organisation for community and voluntary action. The project will develop and redesign current support services to ensure that they are efficient and of high quality, will develop more co-ordinated support to volunteering in the city, as well as look to build relationships with local businesses to enable their expertise and skills to support community and voluntary action.

4. Rationale for the project

In Brighton and Hove there are currently a number of organisations providing support to community and voluntary groups and organisations in the city, and it has become increasingly apparent that the split nature of support has resulted in both perceived and real gaps in support for community and voluntary action. The gap in support is particularly felt by small to medium sized community and voluntary organisations in the city.

In October 2011, the TLI partnership came together to discuss what could be done to improve support to the community and voluntary sector. The TLI Partnership identified that, in order to meet the needs of frontline organisations, what is required is the merging of services provided by a number of providers into a single new infrastructure organisation which can provide much needed continuity of service, better diagnosis of support needs, a unified voice for the sector, and create efficiencies and economies of scale that will help to ensure long term sustainability of infrastructure provision in the city, and support to the much valued local community and voluntary sector.

5. Funding for the project

The transformation project aims to break away from existing patterns of delivery and to rationalise current support into one organisation; the fund provides the investment to undertake this transformation and rationalisation. The fund does not cover the cost of provision and delivery of current services whilst the transformation takes place nor does it cover the cost once it has been achieved.

6. Key outcomes from the project

The project will achieve the following outcomes:

1. The creation of a single infrastructure support organisation that is viable, efficient and relevant is explored and implemented
2. The needs of front line community and voluntary groups are better served through more effective diagnosis and meeting of need, integrated delivery mechanisms, streamlined access routes and increased co-ordination of support services
3. Greater and better co-ordinated investment, sponsorship, pro bono support, employer supported volunteering and mentoring services with businesses, the public and university sectors to help support civil society organisations

7. The vision

This funding offers a one off opportunity to radically change the way that support services for community and voluntary action in Brighton and Hove is provided and delivered. The project will involve the local community and voluntary sector to ensure that the single support organisation has the sector's best interests at heart and that the support is delivered in a way that the sector wants. The single support organisation will first and foremost be grounded in the needs of the sector.

The single support organisation will not only provide a much needed one point of contact and communication channel for community groups and voluntary organisations, but also for public sector organisations and local businesses. This should help reduce complexity and duplication as well as provide economies of scale and efficiencies. The project will look to build on and fulfil the city's volunteer strategy to ensure co-ordinated support to volunteering in the city, and seek to build relationships with local businesses to enable their expertise and skills to support community and voluntary action. All of this activity will enhance local community and voluntary action and ensure that the sector is best placed to contribute to achieving key citywide outcomes.

8. Next steps

The TLI partnership is in the process of setting up robust and transparent governance structures in preparation for drawing down the funding from the Big Lottery in March/April 2012. A transformation manager will be employed for the duration of the project to lead on developing the new single infrastructure support organisation. There will be opportunities for the sector, and particular opportunities for equality groups and neighbourhood groups, to input into the development of the new organisation to ensure that it meets their needs.

Representatives from other partner organisations will also have opportunities to get involved in the strategic direction of the project.

9. An immediate challenge

The Working Together Project (WTP) was a key member of the partnership; however its closure at the end of March 2012 means it has had to withdraw from the project. The gap left by WTP's closure in the city is large and difficult to fill; the services that they provide are much valued and needed within our local communities and the relationships and trust that they have built up with over 1,000 community and voluntary groups will be a challenge to replicate. A staff member from the WTP will continue to be involved in setting this project up, up until the end of March 2012. As a matter of priority the partnership of organisations leading this project is discussing what can be done in the short-term to fill some of the gap left by the closure of WTP, and what needs to be done in the long-term to ensure that training is a part of the new single support organisation.

10. Other challenges

This is an ambitious project which proposes to make radical changes to the way that community and grassroots groups receive support in the city, and the way that volunteering in the city is supported and relationships are built with local businesses to enable their expertise and skills to support community and voluntary action. Change, particularly on this scale, takes time to happen and conversations about merging of services are going to be difficult and challenging. However, the partnership is committed to moving support services in the city forward in a positive way to bring about more efficient, sustainable and high quality services to support community and voluntary action. We welcome the support of BHSP colleagues and the commitment of resources from the council, this will be particularly important in being able to complete a successful transformation project in the current economic environment.

11. For further information about the project please contact:

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