

# CVSF Position Statement on the BHCC Draft Budget 2012/13(14)

11 January 2012

## 1. Aims of CVSF in BHCC draft budget scrutiny

CVSF<sup>i</sup> seeks to exert as much influence as possible during the budget scrutiny process to ensure that priority services, delivered by the community and voluntary are protected. We will:

- Maintain clear & transparent communication with all political parties on Brighton & Hove City Council and retain political neutrality
- Aim to protect the sector from disproportionate cuts
- Aim to protect the grants programmes from disproportionate cuts
- Collect & present supporting evidence

## 2. Overview of members' views

Whilst we are grateful for the ongoing commitment to maintain the grants programmes in 2012/13, our membership believes that small volunteer run services need greater support than ever from the City Council. The loss of national funding in adult learning means that the training provider that many volunteer run organisations relied upon is closing, in addition thresholds for other grant streams are rising. This part of the sector delivers thousands of volunteer hours which benefit the city's economy and quality of life. We urge the City Council to commit to protecting the grants programmes for 2013/14 and, in addition to help find a way to ensure that the training required for volunteers is available on a no-cost basis.

Our membership do not see clear evidence of a desire to invest more in preventative community led services in this budget, we believe that it does not go far enough to shift the emphasis from high cost crisis service provision. We believe that this is only achievable through a partnership approach with the sector and investment should reflect this. In young people, prevention of homelessness and Supporting People in particular the preventative community-led services provided by our members are impacted by this budget. We believe that by working to reduce Council overheads these services provided by non-profit providers could be protected. These voluntary sector cuts impact not only on service provision itself but on the ability of these providers to lever in vital resources to the city.

## 3. Key recommendations of Brighton & Hove's community and voluntary sector:

1. The open manner in which the budget proposals have been brought forward is to be welcomed and built-upon in future years. The sector would welcome early dialogue on how this will happen with the proposed return to a committee system.
2. The impact and outcomes from all council spending (both internal and external) should be measured and clearly understood. More work is needed to make this a reality. We believe that this is an essential component to decision making on resource allocation and that this evidence should be open and transparent.
3. Budget reductions should be made in relation to priorities, impact and value for money. In-house services should not be protected at the expense of those provided externally merely because they are council-run.<sup>ii</sup> A cost-benefit analysis would be useful evidence in understanding these decisions.
4. Funding provided to the third sector should be monitored to ensure it is not disproportionately cut.<sup>iii</sup> The rationale for plans to reduce the grants programme in 2013/14 is not clear especially in view of corporate priorities.
5. 'Salami-slicing' still seems apparent within the budget. The sector does not believe the Star Chamber approach which was undertaken moves the BHCC forward from this process and favours parts of the organisation which have the resource to make a strong case rather than allocating according to need and corporate priorities. Given the scale of the cuts required to 2015/16 this is no longer a viable approach and work needs to speed up a cross council/partner approach.
6. In order to protect services the council will need to work more closely than ever with partner organisations. It is concerning that the council and partners are looking to reduce funding to partnership working.<sup>iv</sup>

7. We believe that reducing resources to the Learning Disabilities partnership, especially in supporting users and providers to participate in consultations is unfair when a major service redesign exercise is planned for 2012/13.
8. Work should be done to understand the impact on job losses in the community and voluntary sector throughout the budget reduction process. National research<sup>v</sup> suggests that the sector is losing 9% of posts, which is further and faster than reductions in the public sector. Our membership believes that this information, together with information on volunteer hours should be gathered locally as part of understanding the impact of decision making on our sector.
9. The Equalities Impact Assessment once completed, should highlight any cumulative impacts on groups and, should identify older people and poverty as themes.

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<sup>i</sup> CVSF (Community & Voluntary Sector Forum) is the umbrella body for the city's community and voluntary sector. We have over 500 groups within our membership. [www.cvsectorforum.org.uk](http://www.cvsectorforum.org.uk) Twitter @cvsfbrighton Email [emma@cvsectorforum.org.uk](mailto:emma@cvsectorforum.org.uk) or telephone 01273 810230

<sup>ii</sup> In particular the sector would point to the budget lines Children's Services on p 57 where £120,000 will be removed from the voluntary sector providers of services to children with disabilities. No clear rationale for this decision was provided during the scrutiny process. In addition the cuts planned for Supporting People and preventing Homelessness are concerns for the sector. A lot of this provision is carried out by the community and voluntary sector.

<sup>iii</sup> The funding provided to the sector whether via grants or through service contracts should be properly flagged when entered onto the payments system.

<sup>iv</sup> In particular the sector expresses concern about the proposed cut of £25,000 to the Policy Team of LSP/PSB support on p83

<sup>v</sup> NCVO Labour Force Survey <http://www.ncvo-vol.org.uk/news/people-hr-employment/charity-workforce-shrinks-nearly-9>