

Penny Thompson – Chief Executive  
Brighton & Hove City Council  
King's House  
Grand Avenue  
Hove

19<sup>th</sup> August 2014

Dear Penny

### **Talking Statues in Brighton & Hove**

I would be most grateful if you could arrange for the following letter to be included on the agenda for the Economic Development & Culture Committee meeting of 18<sup>th</sup> September under Procedure Rule 23.3 of the Council's Constitution.

I would like the Committee to ask officers to investigate introducing innovative new 'talking statue' technology to some of the city's historic statues, monuments and public art installations.

Talking Statues have recently been introduced in London, where playwrights and actors have been commissioned by the not-for-profit arts organisation, Sing London, to put words into the mouths of 40 public statues around the city. In order to activate the statue's 'voice', a smartphone is swiped on a nearby tag and the owner receives an immediate phone call from the statue in question, be it Sherlock Holmes, Queen Victoria or Dick Whittington's cat!

This really is a wonderful idea which could bring Brighton & Hove's rich and varied history and heritage to life using 21<sup>st</sup> Century technology. There are a whole range of famous statues in the city such as Queen Victoria, Prince Regent, Max Miller and Steve Overt who would all have a fascinating story to tell. The technology would also lend itself perfectly to some of our iconic monuments such as the Chattri Memorial and the Peace Statue and even some of the city's fabulous public art installations - for example, the AIDS memorial sculpture in New Steine Gardens.

The aims of the London Talking Statues project would be a perfect fit for Brighton & Hove – namely, to create public benefit by:

- Fostering interest, and overcoming potential barriers to arts and culture by fusing innovative technology with imaginative content in public locations;
- Engaging new audiences for the culture sector, including younger, more technically orientated audiences, and disabled people.

Brighton & Hove is one of the top tourist destinations in the UK and is continually evolving to maintain this status. I think that talking statues would be a fantastic addition to our long list of attractions and would potentially open up the city's fascinating history to a whole new audience. I very much hope that the Committee can agree to progress this.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr. Ann Norman