**Prior Information Notice (PIN): Opportunity for Delivering Innovative Support for the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) Sector in Adur & Worthing**

Adur and Worthing Councils are inviting expressions of interest for innovative infrastructure support services for the Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector. The new contract, valued at £180k over three years, will begin in July 2025, with a focus on transition, resilience, digital innovation, and inclusive collaboration.

**Background**

As part of our ‘Councils for Community’ commitment and [Our Plan](https://www.adur-worthing.gov.uk/media/Media,168817,smxx.pdf), Adur and Worthing Councils are renewing a support strategy for the Third Sector (Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise).

The intention is to take an outcomes-based approach to the commissioning of a new infrastructure offer alongside the evolution of our small grants programmes.

This renewal is taking place in the context of significant financial challenge.  And, in the context of change to our organisational design and the operation of our services, focused on working in more resilient, adaptive and participative ways with our residents and communities.

**Pre-procurement discovery work**

To better understand our needs for supporting the sector from 2025 to 2028, we are conducting participatory research. This research will gather insights into current strengths and future opportunities for improving support for the VCSE.

We will listen to and deliberate with key stakeholders, including sector representatives, council officers, elected members, and infrastructure providers, to inform the future design of VCSE support.

Our starting inquiry questions are:

* How do the councils best support an inclusive and resilient civic infrastructure across Adur and Worthing?
  + What outcomes are we looking to achieve and for whom between 2025-2028?
  + What economic models, mechanisms and infrastructure forms can help achieve those outcomes?

**Scope of opportunity**

This is an exciting opportunity to co-create a future where the VCSE sector thrives through resilience and innovation. We invite expressions of interest from organisations or consortia interested in engaging as participants in this discovery work, with a view to tendering for the future VCSE infrastructure support contract.

In particular, we are keen to engage early with organisations or consortia with the ability to:

* **Innovate and Experiment**: Propose new ways of working with the VCSE sector that foster financial resilience. We are particularly interested in approaches that leverage digital tools, social entrepreneurship, and innovative funding mechanisms.
* **Adapt and Evolve**: Demonstrate a capacity for adaptive leadership, capable of navigating and responding to the evolving needs of the VCSE sector, especially in the context of post-pandemic recovery and the challenges of reduced public sector funding.
* **Participate and Collaborate**: Develop participative approaches that empower local communities and VCSE organisations to co-create solutions. This includes fostering collaboration across sectors and enhancing the sector's capability to engage effectively with residents, businesses, and public sector partners.

**Anticipated areas of focus include:**

1. **Resilience**: Ideas on how VCSE organisations can diversify income streams, reduce reliance on public funding, and build financial resilience.
2. **Digital Innovation**: Leveraging digital tools and platforms to enhance service delivery, community engagement, and organisational efficiency within the VCSE sector.
3. **Inclusion / capacity building**: Proposals that strengthen the capacity of VCSE organisations to engage in participatory governance, co-design with communities, and adapt to emerging challenges.

**Process and Engagement**

We are entering a pre-procurement phase where we will gather insights and ideas through our discovery work and this PIN. Organisations will be invited to participate in further exploratory discussions and workshops, helping to shape the final commissioning strategy and tender documents.

This is an exciting opportunity to co-create VCSE infrastructure that not only supports but also leads the way in community resilience and innovation.

**Timeline**

* **PIN Publication**: October 2024
* **Engagement Workshops**: 25th November and 4th December 2024
* **Tender Process Commences**: End of January 2024

**Contract Start Date**: July 2025.

Interested parties are encouraged to respond by November 8th, 2024.

Please email procurement@adur-worthing.gov.uk with:

A brief introduction outlining your approach and relevant experience, Key ideas for this opportunity. Organisation details (name, address, registration ID) and key contact information."

Please also include details of your organisation@ Name, Address, Companies House or Registered Charity ID and key contact information.