ADUR & WORTHING
COUNCILS

Tender Specification

Community Catalyst: infrastructure to support and enable innovations in inclusive and resilient neighbourhood power and participation

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Welcome and introduction

A warm welcome to this commission.

We are really excited by the opportunity set out in this commission to partner with us to innovate infrastructure that will support and enable inclusive and resilient neighbourhood power and participation.

This commission is grounded in our commitment to be Councils for the Community. It is underpinned by a robust evidence base which includes the stories and wishes of people working for positive change at the grassroots, organisational learning from our councils' recent experiments in community participation and the change and challenge we see now and on the horizon.

In this document we set out the councils' vision for infrastructure which can grow localised, inclusive, self-sustaining forms of community power (trust, relationships & resources); unleash digital tools that can unlock connection, collaboration and resources; and develop and hold healthy democratic spaces.

In the context of the government's devolution programme, we believe this commission is a real opportunity to understand the civic infrastructure needed at a local level that can enable local communities to shape their neighbourhoods in the short and medium term, and build the community power needed in the longer term to have a strong voice in local and regional government.

We welcome your critical engagement with this document and invite your creative responses to the opportunity to partner with us.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Sharon Sluman
Cabinet Member for Communities,
Adur District Council

Cllr Dom Ford
Cabinet Member for Communities, Leisure and Culture, Worthing Borough Council

RESILIENT > ADAPTABLE > PARTICIPATIVE

1. Background to this commission

1.1. The power of participation

At Adur & Worthing Councils we believe participation is key to helping people and places thrive.

From our men's groups to our youth groups, from our sports clubs and community hubs to our green groups, friends of groups and residents associations - we appreciate just how much community action and collaboration helps people connect to themselves, each other, their places and our beautiful environment.

In our recent discovery work we collected more than 140 stories from people working for positive change in their communities. The significant mental and physical health benefits resulting from either participating in, or being supported by local community groups and organisations were made overwhelmingly clear.

We are grateful to have such vibrant, committed and creative citizens, groups, artistic and social enterprises across our borough and district, many of whom have been well supported by local infrastructure organisations in recent years.

And despite the financial constraints facing our councils, this commission's commitment to evolving infrastructure support reflects the value of community participation to individual wellbeing and the health of our communities and local ecosystem

1.2. The legacy of support for local groups and organisations in 2025

For much of the last decade our councils have demonstrated support for our local voluntary community groups and organisations by funding the core costs of voluntary service infrastructure support.

The focus of this support at the grassroots has been on capacity building (advice and guidance for groups or founders on safe set-up and governance, as well as

training and support with fundraising) and volunteering (managing and coordinating opportunities and training).

Many local groups have benefited from support with the process of getting established, growing and sourcing grant funding for their projects. And voluntary service infrastructure has played a really important role in strengthening the fabric of local civic life through the weaving of relationships and peer-to-peer learning networks and through the facilitation of shared endeavours, knowledge, events and concerns.

With funding from the NHS and West Sussex County Council, this infrastructure has also played an important role in leadership and advocacy; and partnership and collaboration in response to a range of shared concerns including the needs of Ukrainian refugees, the network of local emergency food groups and local community health networks.

1.3. Adapting to change

Recognising our councils and community groups are operating with increasing financial constraints; in more challenging contexts (i.e. cost of living, housing, health and ecological crises; and in more polarised times (i.e. the loss of trust in institutions, media and politicians) we see the need to evolve our model of infrastructure support to enable more inclusive and resilient community participation and maximise the impact of the councils' funding.

To do this, the new model will:

- **focus on the neighbourhood as the key unit of care and change. This aligns with the councils' new approach to neighbourhood working, and ambition to work in more participatory ways with our ward councillors.**

- **Facilitate a 'test and learn' approach to capacity building in the neighbourhood focused on practical action to address shared needs and concerns.**

- **Support and enable existing groups and organisations to evolve in response to changing environments as well as creating a space at the table for different people of all backgrounds to get involved in community action.**

1.4. Our Missions

Over 2025, and in the context of devolution and local government reorganisation, we will embed these changes working inside and out with our councillors, staff, partners and communities to revisit a vision for our places and the possibilities presented by working together towards ambitious missions that are bigger than any one community or local authority (as outlined in Our Plan).

Our Missions (Thriving economy; Thriving environment, Thriving people and Thriving places) are ambitious enough to attract partners to bring their expertise and resources.

Missions are not council services in the traditional sense, rather they help deliver our outcomes using different levers. Working towards missions will help bring more money in and/or reduce costs, while delivering longer term economic and social benefits. Missions are both long term goals and can help focus people's minds about the ways we can all contribute and make change happen.

Examples of taking a missions-based approach include our environmental work such as:

- Worthing Heat Network where we are working with a variety of partners to develop new regenerative infrastructure expected to cut the town's carbon emissions by at least 3,000 tonnes a year.
- Sussex Bay where we are on a mission to generate a £50 million fund by 2050 to accelerate local seascape recovery along 100 miles of Sussex coastline.
- Sussex Energy where we are working across different sectors with a bold ambition to produce as much energy as is used by reducing energy demand and increasing the local supply of zero carbon energy.

Beyond the borders of Adur and Worthing, the work in Camden, Bogota, Barcelona and in Sweden show the opportunity of bringing together partners and communities around common causes that are bigger than any single actor can solve on its own and that matter deeply to local communities.

The work in particular in Sweden shows the opportunity of being able to work at both a grassroots and institutional level, and test out practical and policy solutions together. This reinforces the importance of the infrastructure support we are commissioning and the roles of the councils as "partners".

1.5. Stories of inclusion and resilience from our grassroots

As part of the evidence base for this commission and given the strong links between community action and positive health and wellbeing outcomes, the councils wanted to learn more about the conditions for inclusive and resilient community participation and enterprise from listening to the experiences of people working for positive change at the grassroots.

Using UK Shared Prosperity Funding, we worked with social enterprise Ideas Alliance in late 2024 to undertake discovery work that could inform this commission.

We reached out to around 400 local groups, networks and organisations to carry out a survey, 15-hours of interviews and observation, collaborative research with active citizens including young people and a series of deliberative events.

And, we learnt a huge amount about where the councils can make a difference through this commission, our organisational design work, and other policies and programmes. The full report can be found on our Community Participation webpage here.

1.5.1. Inclusion

People's stories about including and involving people highlighted that there are different ways of understanding inclusion. For some people, inclusion is about

involving more diverse groups in participation opportunities. And there were wishes from citizens and groups who wanted to be able to include and involve more people from diverse backgrounds in community action.

For others, inclusion is about the creation of safe spaces where individuals with shared experiences can enjoy peer support and connection i.e. self-help groups.

Our research highlighted the importance of being intentional about creating participation spaces where people can feel included, find belonging and connection. And the importance of moving at the speed of trust and relationships.

This is especially important where people are experiencing polarisation such as:

- shifting cultures and demographics i.e. in Worthing
- economic gaps between neighbours i.e. Sompting
- where families work long hours without local access to services and opportunities i.e. Fishersgate

In other stories, being intentional has meant individuals and groups have had to adapt (internally and culturally) to understand and respond positively to diverse lived experiences (i.e. groups including young people who are neurodiverse and/or LGBTQ+).

Encouragingly we are learning from people's stories and wishes, that it's the simple things that are most effective in including and involving people from different groups and backgrounds; social occasions with easy entry points; informal settings (particularly important for minoritised groups such as refugees); and easy access to community spaces.

1.5.2. Resilience

People's stories about overcoming challenges pointed to a common set of obstacles to community participation such as cost and bureaucracy, as well as opportunities for building resilience through collaboration and creativity.

Removing obstacles (i.e. access to community spaces, insurance, parking) and bureaucracy (i.e. business rate exemption forms) to create a more friendly environment for community action was highlighted through the research. There is a real opportunity for the councils to work innovatively with citizens, local groups

and partners to remove barriers and reduce costs in order to unleash community action.

Other challenges to community participation included experiences of burnout due to the workload associated with the formalisation of groups and organisations, and the ongoing challenges of fundraising. And we heard how longer-term funding and access to shared resources would make a huge difference to small groups.

In people's wishes, there was a strong theme from more seasoned community leaders who wanted to step back from their active roles; welcoming support for succession planning and regeneration.

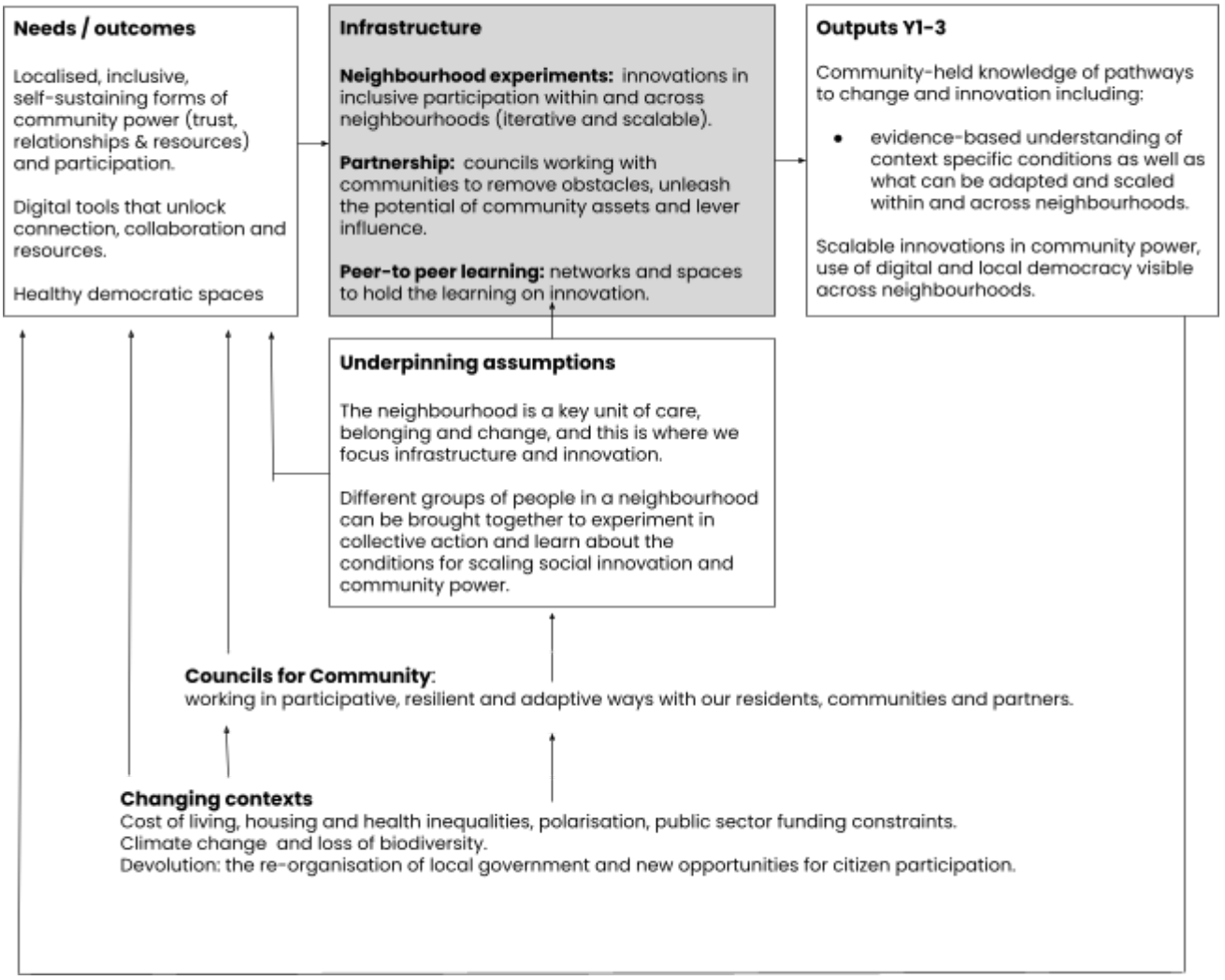
Obstacles aside, people stories highlighted the great energy for collaboration and community action i.e. 'doing with people'. There were stories of collaboration between community groups working with arts organisations and business to deliver free community events. There were also wishes to create more spaces and places where people can connect with their neighbours and come up with solutions to common problems together.

In Section 2 we draw further on this discovery work to outline the model of infrastructure we want to commission and how it is grounded in council and community experience of what works, what's needed and what's changing. We welcome critical engagement and responses to these ideas.

2. What infrastructure are we commissioning for and why?

Informed by our discovery work, our councils' re-design, organisational learning from experiments in place-based participation, and the change and challenge on the horizon we set out the following model of infrastructure to support and enable innovations in inclusive and resilient community power and participation.

Figure 1: our model of infrastructure support for 2025-28



2.1. Underpinning assumptions

2.1.1. The neighbourhood is where we focus infrastructure and innovation

We know our neighbourhoods are a key factor in social and civic health. It is in our neighbourhoods where people can develop deep meaningful relationships with each other and their places; where people can feel belonging; where people are part of informal networks of care and support; and where people can feel ownership, pride and identity. And it's at the neighbourhood level where people

can take action together on shared concerns and see tangible impact in the short and medium term.

These are all key reasons why the councils are reorganising key teams to work in a joined up way in our neighbourhoods (including parks, waste, environmental health, planning and projects).

For community stakeholders who engaged with our discovery work, the importance of working in a hyperlocal, place-based way came through strongly. Importantly, it is in the neighbourhood where we can find common ground with people who are different to us and this is where we can work to overcome experiences of polarisation highlighted in our discovery work.

With the funding allocation available, taking a 'neighbourhood approach' will allow us to pilot in two neighbourhoods with the aim of platforming the learning across Adur and Worthing and with opportunities to scale the model over the duration of the commission and beyond.

We are in the process of identifying the qualities we are looking for in pilot neighbourhoods. We are thinking about what we can learn by working in neighbourhoods on the boundaries (i.e. our communities at the edge of our borough and district); neighbourhoods with under utilised council-owned assets (i.e. community buildings and open spaces); and neighbourhoods facing a high degree of socioeconomic challenge (i.e. higher levels of food poverty and other health inequalities).

2.1.2. Different groups of people can and need to be brought together

Our discovery work (described in section 1.6.) has highlighted the need for infrastructure that can facilitate different groups of people coming together in the neighbourhood to address common challenges and overcome barriers. Recent council-led participation projects have demonstrated what is possible when

different groups of people come together around shared goals and aspirations for their places and engage in practical action.

Our work on nature restoration in Cissbury fields which involved local residents, dog walkers and councillors, as well as partners including the National Trust and South Downs National Park, demonstrated how participatory methods can enable different groups of people with apparently different concerns and conflicting priorities to come together to take on longer-term stewardship for a place they all love.

Similarly, our participation work in Lancing demonstrated the value of mapping community assets, holding community conversations and bringing together different groups of local people (including young people, business leaders, anchor institutions, professionals, parents and carers, older residents, those involved in community action and elected members) to deliberate on the future priorities for their village. Informed by data including lived experience, participants agreed a set of common aspirations and priorities for community and council action, as well generating lots of practical ideas.

The Cissbury and Lancing projects were council-initiated experimental participatory processes which intentionally brought diverse groups of people together to explore their relationships to their places and each other.

Through these experiments, we learned how processes and spaces which enable different people to share diverse experiences and perspectives naturally result in new ideas and innovations that are community-held thereby creating more capacity for community and power (trust, relationships and resources) through the process.

This commission will be about embedding inclusive, participation design and participatory methods into an infrastructure offer for our neighbourhoods (see section 2.3.1.).

2.2. Needs and outcomes

2.1.1. New forms of localised, inclusive and self-sustaining community participation and power

Reflecting the underpinning assumptions outlined in section 2.1. we want to see the development of new forms of localised, self-sustaining social and collective power.

This focus is a deliberate response to what we have heard from the grassroots about the challenging funding landscape for individual charities and not-for-profits, and the stories of smaller and more informal unconstituted groups who have worked with the gift economy, skills and resource exchange and in partnership with business and anchor institutions to make brilliant things happen on a shoestring.

Given the scarcity of public and other grant funding and yet the abundance of creativity and resourcefulness of our communities, this points to the potential of working more intentionally with local networks and assets to grow place-based networks of trust, relationships and resources (community power) that can in the longer term open up alternative models of funding and partnership.

Starting small and scaling up over time, we are keen for a partner who can draw on asset-based community development principles to work with the strengths of neighbourhoods to grow an eco-system which includes communities, enterprise and anchor institutions.

We need a partner who can bring expertise in partnership and co-operative and social enterprise models of action to this endeavour.

2.1.2. Digital tools that unlock connection, collaboration and resources

We need infrastructure which can re-imagine digital as an enabler and amplifier of community action and power rather than an inhibitor.

We know from our discovery work that people's relationships with 'digital' is not straight forward. Some tools have reduced the time people spend running organisations, but some digitised processes which form part of 'infrastructure support' for groups and organisations (i.e. training / onboarding / applying for grants) are experienced as a barrier to community participation and action.

We believe digital tools can unlock connection, collaboration and resources if used in creative and effective ways. So through this commission we want to create an environment which supports and enables ongoing experimentation with digital tools (including existing free tools such as 'open collective' or 'match my project', as well as WhatsApp, Facebook and AI) to address the 'wishes' emerging from our discovery work. These wishes included:

- more connected communities (to one another and to local resources including community spaces)
- greater sharing of resources and other forms of collaboration
- matchmaking gifts and talents to community action
- engaging and mobilising different groups of people in different ways
- simplifying organisational tasks
- communicating opportunities and successes.

We are looking for a partner who can bring expertise and energy to experiment in digital.

2.1.3. Healthy democratic spaces

As councils for the community, we want to build trust and grow participation in local democracy. We are exploring the edge between participatory democracy and representative democracy and how both forms of democratic participation can be mutually strengthened by being in a healthy dynamic.

Our discovery work revealed that the relationship between the councils and people working for positive change in their communities is complex. We heard from the grassroots about the value local people place on working with council teams and councillors who can bring expertise and resources to community action. But we also heard stories about the bureaucratic barriers and obstacles (including politics) that sometimes make it harder for people to participate.

We need a skilled practitioner who can see the wider system, be attune to local political dynamics, hold space for contributions from elected members while enabling diverse community participation and action that can transcend and include different party political positions.

This will mean designing and facilitating the kinds of processes and spaces where everyone can show up as 'human'; where people can find connection and common purpose in the neighbourhood and build a view of power which is social and collective - flowing from trust and relationships. It will also involve creative and innovative ways of working with the councils to involve and include local people's voices in local government reorganisation.

We need a partner who understands the local democratic context and change ahead (devolution and local government reorganisation), and who is confident in enabling inclusive participatory and deliberative processes that involve local communities and elected representatives.

2.3. Infrastructure support

In this section, we describe the three components of infrastructure support we want to commission for 2025-28. This infrastructure aligns with our assumptions, is designed to address the needs and outcomes outlined above, and will work within our funding constraints.

2.3.1. Neighbourhood experiments: innovations in inclusive community participation (iterative and scalable)

To meet the needs and outcomes outlined in section 2.2 we want to see infrastructure which can catalyse inclusive participatory experiments and innovations within and across neighbourhoods.

While the focus of these experiments and innovations will need to be determined by community participants, our discovery research has already highlighted areas of shared community interest including the need to strengthen and **evolve models of participation and volunteering**, **community space** and **funding and resourcing**.

Our vision for infrastructure which enables a creative and experimental (fail fast, fail forward) approach to innovation is grounded in our discovery research and everything we are learning through our participation work about the creativity and knowledge of our local people and groups.

We are also inspired by the experimental spirit and imagination of projects from elsewhere including Birmingham's neighbourhood transitions demonstrator Civic Square and Participatory City projects such as Open Works in Lambeth and Every One Every Day in Barking and Dagenham.

Drawing on participatory action research, Art of Hosting and 'Test and Learn' methods and approaches, Year 1 will be focused on supporting and **enabling grassroots and community leaders to experiment and innovate in the neighbourhood. We envision this to begin with pilots in the neighbourhoods before scaling out**.

We anticipate Year 2 will focus on different ways of scaling successful innovations i.e. scaling deep (growing and strengthening community power in the pilot

neighbourhoods); scaling out (pollinating innovations across neighbourhoods); and scaling up (influencing broader systems or policies within the councils and other anchor organisations).

We anticipate Year 3 will continue to scale out and we will begin to see tangible results flowing from a growth in community power in a number of neighbourhoods such as different forms of community partnership, resourcing and investment - thereby building resilience for the longer term.

For further description see section 3.

2.3.2. Partnership: councils working with communities to remove obstacles, unleash the potential of assets and lever influence

This element of infrastructure is about **addressing the call for our councils to remove obstacles to community action** and use our levers of influence to create a more friendly and enabling environment for **grassroots and community leaders** (see section 1.6.).

Partnership will involve ongoing dialogue and joint action with the councils to unleash the potential of our organisational design and our councils' levers to work in more participatory ways with our residents and communities to respond to the challenges and opportunities revealed to us through our recent discovery work.

The councils will be bringing considerable resources, levers and expertise to this partnership including acting as:

- **An enabler**: removing obstacles to community action at the neighbourhood level through collaborative working
- **A resourcer**: aligning our small grants programmes to seed fund innovative models of community participation in the neighbourhood; make available assets i.e. land or buildings for community action.
- **A facilitator and convenor**: convening of grassroots community leaders across the borough and district and iterating of our Participation Lab programme to include a mix of community and council participants.
- **An amplifier**: Identifying opportunities for alternative funding streams and models through collaboration with our investment and procurement teams.

- **A connector:** facilitating relationships with decision-makers, community connectors and existing networks of community and voluntary groups

Key ways we can align this enabling action into our internal change work is through:

- The evolution of our neighbourhood and matrixed teams' ways of working with communities.
- Bringing together internal and external learning & development in participation to embed new ways of working with communities.
- Connecting experiments in neighbourhoods to our high level mission work (including work with strategic partners in other places in the system).

To bring this partnership to life we envisage the establishment of regular check-ins and collaborative activities that can connect the councils' inside change work with what our partners and our communities are learning about pathways to change.

We anticipate these activities to include collaboration on the renewal of the councils' small grant funding programmes, as well unlocking resources and removing barriers to community action - connecting into the councils' mission work.

2.3.3. Peer-to-peer learning: networks and spaces to hold learning and impact evaluation

This final element of infrastructure is about **evolving highly valued peer-to-peer learning opportunities and networks to support people working at grassroots to develop and strengthen relationships; share knowledge and expertise;identify resources and develop new forms of collaboration and partnerships**.

For 2025-28 we want to see the establishment of peer-to-peer learning networks that can work at two or more levels within the system.

At the first level, we want to see the establishment of a 'within neighbourhood' peer-to-peer learning network that can be the container and provide the rigour for learning about innovations i.e. what works, what doesn't work, and what can be adapted and scaled..

This will require regular convening in the neighbourhood, the intentional involvement of different groups of people and a participatory methodology that can hold the learning in real time (e.g. ESLA loops - Evidence, Sense-making, Learning and Adaption loops). The focus will be on **creating and sharing knowledge about what works and why.**

Within the first 3-6-months of Year 1 we would like to see **the establishment of a second peer-to-peer learning network that can bring together people engaged in pilots with those from other neighbourhoods to learn 'What could work in other neighbourhoods?' We envision this space to be open to groups from across Adur and Worthing with both digital and in-person learning / knowledge-sharing opportunities.**

The focus of this second network would be to support and enable 'cross pollination' of ideas between neighbourhoods working with the energy and enthusiasm of local people and groups. In both cases, the peer-to-peer learning networks become holders of community data and knowledge about what can be scaled within and across neighbourhoods.

3. Delivery specification

In this section we outline an indicative, iterative delivery programme over the three years.

Year 1: Soil, seeds and shoots (July 2025 to June 2026)

Key deliverables:

1. Establish experimental and collaborative 'learning by doing' pilots in the neighbourhoods where residents, active citizens, and local groups from all backgrounds can connect; develop shared purpose and test and iterate experiments in participation and community action.

2. Draw on adaptive and participative methodologies to establish peer-to-peer learning networks to create and hold knowledge about which experiments are working, why and the conditions for scaling.

3. Establish partnership with the councils to test and learn how to remove obstacles to community action in the neighbourhood, unleash the potential of community funding and assets and work with the councils' levers of influence including elected representatives and strategic partnerships.

Key activities:

Trust and relationship building in place (soil)

- Milestone 1: Evidence gathering, mapping and connecting , making visible communities of place / interest, and community assets (including key community connectors, groups and individuals).
- Milestone 2: Convening different groups of people in place and online using creative, social and participatory methods so residents, active citizens and local groups can connect; develop a shared story of place; and make visible the contribution they can and want to make to their neighbourhood (strengths and aspirations).

Capability and capacity building through experiments in social action (seeds)

- Milestone 1: Co-produce shared inquiries (e.g. community spaces; sharing of assets and resources; including and involving underrepresented groups and/or practical action projects.)
- Milestone 2: Facilitate a series of small-scale participation experiments to explore shared inquiries, using participatory methods and innovations in the use of digital tools.

Peer-to-peer learning on impact and innovation 'within-neighbourhood' (shoots)

- Milestone 1: Establish regular convening of 'within' and 'across' neighbourhood peer-to-peer learning network(s) to hold the learning on innovation.
- Milestone 2: Take a participatory ESLA loops approach to gather, sense-make and distil evidence to identify what's working, what's not, what needs adapting and the conditions and pathways for change within the neighbourhood.
- Milestone 3: During months three-six establish a second peer-to-peer learning network which can bring together people involved in experimental pilots with wider groups and organisations from across Adur and Worthing to learn together. The focus will be on identifying patterns and conditions for change and how these could be scaled across different places (scaling out).

Partnership with the councils during Year 1 (shoots)

- Milestone 1: Establish regular rhythms and rituals with relevant council officers and teams to enable progress on key deliverable three. This could include council officer participation in projects / learning and ongoing dialogue and collaboration on the evolution of the councils' community funding programme and community assets strategy.
- Milestone 2: Participate in community leaders' convenings with opportunities to platform learning from the pilot neighbourhoods across Adur and Worthing.
- Milestone 3: Work with the council to help create the space for communities to deliberate and participate in visioning on the future of their places at a neighbourhood and coastal level linked to devolution.

Year 1 outputs:

- Emerging community-held knowledge of pathways to change and

innovation in the neighbourhood. To include an evidence-based understanding of context specific conditions for innovation and 'scaling deep'.
- Emerging Innovations in use of digital tools to unlock connection, collaboration and resources.
- Emerging innovations in working in participatory ways with the councils (including elected representatives) and partners from other sectors.

Year 2: Growth and branching (July 2026 to June 2027)

Key deliverables:

1. Scaled experiments in participation to deepen impact in pilots and/or pollinate and seed across other neighbourhoods.

2. Grow the peer-to-peer learning networks 'within neighbourhoods' and 'across neighbourhoods' with a focus on learning to scale out successful experiments and innovations across neighbourhoods.

3. Evolve participation and partnership to include the councils and other local actors such as businesses and anchor institutions to scale and grow capacity for self-sustaining neighbourhood action.

Year 2 outputs:

- Growing community-held knowledge of pathways to change and innovation including evidence-based understanding of context specific conditions for innovation as well as what can be adapted and scaled within and across neighbourhoods.
- Growing community power in the pilot neighbourhoods (trust, relationships and resources).
- Scaled innovations in working in participatory ways with the councils (including elected representatives) and partners from other sectors across Adur and Worthing.

Year 3: Fruition and regeneration (July 2027 to March 2028)

Key deliverables

Scaled experiments in participation to deepen impact in pilot neighbourhoods and/or pollinate and seed across other neighbourhoods.

Grow the peer-to-peer learning networks to hold the learning and evaluation on scaling deep (within neighbourhoods), scaling out (across neighbourhoods) and scaling up (influencing strategic partners / statutory authorities).

Evolve participation and partnership to include the councils and other local actors such as businesses and anchor institutions to continue to scale and grow capacity for self-sustaining neighbourhood action.

Year 3 outputs

- Strong community-held knowledge of pathways to change and innovation across Adur and Worthing including:
    - Increasingly resilient, inclusive and localised forms of community power.
    - Scaled digital and democratic innovations visible across neighbourhoods.

4. Identification of opportunities for 'scaling up' innovations in neighbourhood power and participation across the Sussex coast.

4. Our principles and ways of working

Our discovery work with grassroots groups and infrastructure organisations uncovered key ways of working aligned to our organisational principles which need to guide the delivery of this commission.

Participative - root support infrastructure in people and places:

- Build from what's working and build from whose missing;
- Use community listening, conversations, research and coaching to connect communities through the care, creativity and energy they share.
- Co-produce solutions and build collective power to take action including place-based enterprise.

Resilient - relationships are the engine of change:

- Social interactions that build trust underpin volunteering and social action.
- Match-make skills, expertise and common challenges.
- Nurture an ecosystem where the VCSE is an equal partner.
- Engage business as part of community; link into political structures , anchor institutions; take advantage of Sussex-wide funding opportunities and statutory bodies (councils) to remove barriers and bureaucracy from social action.

Adaptive - practical action:

- Shift from thinking to action, and learn through doing.
- Test and learn, experiment, fail fast and test again.
- Experiment with digital and AI to make it easier to take social action.
- Experiment with removing barriers.
- Make it easy to keep listening and remain accountable to people and places.

5. Desired qualities and experience

Participation

- Strong knowledge and expertise in participation design, methods and practices including hosting and facilitating inclusive participatory spaces and processes drawing on action research methods and principles.
- High levels of creativity and willingness to experiment with creative methods of community engagement and participation - drawing inspiration from the Arts.
- Strong knowledge and experience of working with, supporting and enabling volunteers and voluntary groups.

Learning and evaluation

- Experience of convening and facilitating evidence-based peer-to-peer learning networks and spaces e.g. action learning sets.
- Knowledge of participatory developmental evaluation and digital tools to support peer learning and evaluation processes.

Social innovation

- Experience in working with communities to innovate solutions.
- Knowledge and experience of using iterative experimental or 'test and learn' methods.
- Track record of enabling others to scale innovation.

Digital and data

- Experience in creative and effective use of digital tools for enabling connection, collaboration, sharing of resources, growing community solidarity.
- Skilled in data gathering and taking a participatory approach to data analysis and sensemaking.
- Skilled in using digital tools to support and enable data gathering, analysis and sense-making.

Political nous

- Knowledge and understanding of local authorities, local democratic systems and the roles, powers and interests of cabinet members and ward councillors and council officers.
- Ability to navigate party political dynamics and hold inclusive, democratic and participatory spaces.
- Experience in bringing together and facilitating different groups of people including elected representatives.

Community power

- Knowledge and experience of working with Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) approaches.
- Experience in designing and implementing grassroots-level projects focused on collaborative practical action.
- Skilled in growing trust, relationships, and networks.
- Experienced in partnership working and stakeholder relationship management.
- Experience in social enterprise or cooperatives.
- Experience in facilitating processes and relationships that can unleash resources and investment in communities over time.

6. Length, value and terms of contract

Length and value

£165,000 over 2 years and 9 months.

- Year 1: July 2025 to June 2026 (£60,000)
- Year 2: July 2026 to June 2027 (£60,000)
- Year 3: July 2027 to March 2028 (£45,000)

During the life of the contract there may be opportunities for additional funding either for specific outputs or to manage available grants.

No fault termination clause

Given the fragile finances of both councils we reserve the right to terminate the contract with a three month notice period. (We only foresee invoking this in the event of a section 114 notice for effective insolvency being issued by either council. We would use that time to carefully transition or close down work in a safe way.)

7. Requirements for compliance

- All services must align with safeguarding policies.
- All services must have suitable data protection policies in place for any personal data collected during the course of delivery
- Services should adhere to standards of quality and inclusivity as defined by the Councils' equalities and diversity guidelines.
- Providers must comply with health and safety regulations.

8. Impact and learning evaluation

Impact and learning evaluation will be in the form of a participatory approach to developmental evaluation and will need to be fully integrated as a key element of the infrastructure described in 2.3.3.

Impact and learning evaluation will be community held and will focus on adaptive learning in relation to:

- testing our underpinning assumptions (section 2.1)
- understanding how to move closer to the outcomes we want to achieve (section 2.2)
- inclusive participatory experiments and innovations that can be scaled (section 2.3.1.)
- partnership with the councils (section 2.3.2.).

Working with the 'within-neighbourhood' and 'across neighbourhood' peer-to-peer learning networks you will co-design learning questions, gather and interpret data, and inform action. The networks will likely need support examining how their own outcomes interlink with the outcomes of the councils and with developing user-friendly and rigorous tools and sensemaking practices.