

**Report for Burgess Hill Town Council on MSVA's Community Room at
38 Church Road, Burgess Hill RH15 9AE**

In January 2108 Burgess Hill Town Councillors kindly agreed to give us a grant of £1,000 to enable us to cover some of the costs of running a community room at our Burgess Hill offices.

In 2018 the community room has been used by 38 VCS groups for a range of meetings including U3A, Alcoholics Anonymous, Park Wives Ladies Group, Safe in Sussex, Community Transport, Mid Sussex Older Peoples Council and Carers Support West Sussex who have recently started holding their Mid Sussex Carer Learning and Training Programme in the room. It is available for any organisation to use with discounted rates for MSVA member groups. (A full list of users is attached).

The room is also used as a training venue by us and by other organisations. MSVA provides subsidised training for VCS groups on topics related to running a charity/community group. This year we have held the following training courses in the community room:

- Lone Working
- Good Governance: Trustee Roles and Responsibilities
- Social Media and Publicity Bite-sized Workshop
- Governance Healthcheck
- Emergency First Aid

Sussex Community Transport, who regularly attend our training courses and use the room to run their own training programme made the following comment:

"It is an excellent resource for charity workers and voluntary sector organisations for training days. It cuts our training costs in half. As a charity we save £100s per year using MSVA's room instead of hiring elsewhere. It keeps our local volunteers' training in the area they volunteer in and creates a community feel amongst them."

Other organisations who use our community room for training are Sussex Oakleaf and West Sussex County Council who recently ran a workshop on Child Sexual Exploitation, Radicalisation and Online Safety.

The room is busy every day. With the closure of Martlets Hall, we anticipate that demand for the room will increase as there will be fewer affordable rooms for groups to hire in the town centre. The grant from Burgess Hill Town Council, as well as an additional grant of £2,500 from Sussex Community Foundation has enabled us to continue to subsidise the hiring of the community room. The rent and service charge on the community room is £14,432.40 per annum. The rent is £8896.80 and the service charge is £5535.60. Although the rent is fixed for 5 years, the service charge allows for an increase of 2% above RPI per annum from 2019.

At the end of October 2018 MSVA had earned £5,526.81 in income from hire of the community room. We estimate that income for the 5 months from November 2018 to March 2019 will be £4,000 (average £900 per month November, January, February and March + £400 for December). Therefore the total estimated income from hire of the community room for 2018/19 will be £9527 (less staff costs) resulting in a shortfall of £4905.

When the grant from BHTC was approved in January 2018, it was noted that MSVA had large reserves. Of these reserves, £46500.00 is set aside for closure. The trustees have also recently taken the decision to use some of our unrestricted reserves to increase staff hours in order to ensure that the level of support we give to community groups is maintained. I attach balance sheets prepared by our treasurer showing that without the £6000 in grants from Sussex Community Foundation and Burgess Hill Town Council and the removal re-imburement of £8912, we would have had a deficit of £16,554 for the current financial year and the predicted loss for 2019/20 is £22,231.

Councillors also asked if MSVA received any support from Haywards Heath Town Council. In the summer we applied for a grant from Haywards Heath Town Council to set up a pilot project to identify the developmental needs of local community groups and tailor support to meet those needs as we had become aware that several smaller groups had closed. Unfortunately, the proposal was turned down, but Haywards Heath Town Council does support MSVA by providing us with free rooms for training and meetings with local groups. In the New Year MSVA will also be contacting Parish Councils to see whether there is any support available from them.

We have recently sent out a survey to regular users asking them how their group benefits from using the community room. Here are some of the comments that we received:

“We use the community room to deliver the Weight off Workshops for Mid Sussex Wellbeing. As a public service, our funds are limited. We don’t want to impose too much of a cost on our clients and the MSVA community room provides us the means to give the people of Burgess Hill a much needed service to support their health and wellbeing. Our clients say the room is comfortable and easy to access which helps us to deliver the course we are providing. The staff at MSVA have provided excellent customer service in accommodating our needs and allowing us to hire their room. If the room was to become unavailable we would struggle to provide the service to the Burgess Hill community that we want to.”
Mid Sussex Wellbeing Weight Off Workshops.

“The room we now hire from you is the best available to our members .The location in the centre of town gives us chance to walk there in the evening for those of us that don’t drive, those that do drive have on-site parking and those that have mobility problems can be dropped off near to the door where there is a lift to take them to the second floor.”
Park Wives Ladies Group.

“We use the room for our monthly committee meetings and find it very clean, tidy and purposeful. It is a central meeting point with adequate parking and reasonable hire costs.” **Mid Sussex Youth and Minor Football League.**

“The cost of hiring the community room is very reasonable which is important when you are a charity and provides us with everything we need to run a parent/carer workshop. It’s in the centre of Burgess Hill and there is parking which is great. I would recommend to others.” **Reaching Families.**

The community room provided by MSVA is an invaluable resource which we make regular use of. Having access to an affordable local meeting space is essential to our operations and our ability to effectively deliver our services. The room is a wonderful environment to teach in with lots of space and natural lighting. We use the room to provide learning and development opportunities to our volunteers and staff as well as community space for our clients and for staff meetings. The staff at MSVA are very helpful and accommodating and we hope to see them continue with this facility and their fantastic work long into the future.” **Sussex Oakleaf.**

“As a service we just wanted to say how useful the hire of the community room has been for our us. This room is very safe and comfortable, which has been a lovely space in which to hold our groups for very vulnerable women. It is always clean, warm/cool and well equipped with flipchart/ paper etc.” **Safe in Sussex.**

“The MSVA community room is an essential meeting place for Mid Sussex Marlins Swimming Club. There are very few suitable meeting / training rooms available to the Club in the vicinity and, having lost a previous facility at the Triangle, the MSVA room has become more essential to us. We regularly use the room for our Board Meetings, interviews and training courses. It is especially useful for training courses being near the town centre facilities and close enough to the Triangle pool to enable our trainees to move between the two locations for swim courses. The discounted rate helps us enormously as we operate as a 'not for profit' entity and try to keep our expenditure on administrative matters to a minimum so that we can minimise our members club fees. If we had to pay commercial rates for hiring of training facilities we would not be able to fund so many courses for our volunteers. “ **Mid Sussex Marlins Swimming Group.**

We are very grateful for the support that Burgess Hill town Council gives us. The grant of £1,000 has made a difference to our finances and I ask that you consider making it an annual grant and increasing it to £2,000 from 2019 onwards as this would enable us to continue to support VCS groups with affordable accommodation for their activities.