

## Think Venue partnership reaps rewards



**The UK's largest local authority has found an innovative way to support Social Enterprises and Community Groups – without costing a penny!**

In fact, Birmingham City Council's partnership with Think Venue, a venue finding directory of non-for-profit and social enterprise organisations across the West Midlands, has actually saved the local authority up to 30% on previous spend.

The partnership between Think Venue, a co-operative organisation, and Birmingham's local authority was established in 2009 when the procurement teams were tasked with saving money while at the same time creating 'social value' from their spend.

At the time the city council were spending £1.2 million on venue spaces across the city, with the majority of this spend going to private businesses, conference centres and hotels.

The council procurement team, led by Neil Hopkins, worked with Think Venue to identify third sector organisations that could offer alternative spaces for

meetings, training and events which would divert this spend and provide a valuable income stream for organisations to meet their charitable objectives.

The partnership has been very successful with an increase in spend with third sector venues rising from 30% prior to 2009 to 100% by 2010/11.

Neil Hopkins, Head of Procurement, Strategy and Performance, said: *"I am delighted with the way the third sector has come together to offer a wide range of high quality venues throughout the city. This approach could be easily replicated in other areas. I would be happy to share our experience of adopting the policy to use Think Venues while complying with the council's procurement rules."*

Think Venue is now looking to work with other local authorities across the West Midlands and nationally so they too can save money and support their local community based charities and social enterprises - without costing a penny!

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Open Innovation in Social Enterprise meeting at Concept Conference Centre, Birmingham.