Report title: VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT COMMISSIONING
Wards affected: Citywide
Strategic Director: Alison Comley
Report Authors: Di Robinson & Gemma Dando

RECOMMENDATION for the Mayor's approval:
1. To agree the timetable for the commissioning process and the outcomes which describe the purpose and expected achievements for the VCS infrastructure grant.

2. To agree the level of funding over a 4 year period with an option to extend for a further year, including a tapered reduction in funding alongside an expectation that the successful organisation will work towards a new funding model which maximises income and minimises costs.

3. To note that the timetable, outcomes and proposed funding levels are designed to ensure that VCS support is available to the sector throughout the implementation of the prospectus in 2016/17 which will be a time of change for the sector, and that the tapering of funding will not commence until the prospectus is established.

a. **Purpose of the report:**
This report seeks to confirm the timetable, funding and outcomes for commissioning the grant for voluntary and community sector (VCS) infrastructure services.

b. **Key background / detail:**

1. Bristol City Council currently provides £453,796 per year in grant funding for infrastructure support for VCS organisations to enable free infrastructure support service to be offered to all VCS organisations in Bristol. The current grant agreement comes to an end in May 2016.

2. It is essential that a re-commissioned service is in place in 2016 in order to support the sector in the grants rounds resulting from the VCS Prospectus in autumn 2016.

3. The proposal is for a 4 year funding agreement with an option to extend for a further year, with a tapering of funding of between 15% and 20% in years 3 and 4 of the grant period.

4. The proposed outcomes for the grant are based on a review of performance against existing outcomes, consulting the VCS, the strategic context and the reduction in BCC budgets.

BRISTOL CITY COUNCIL
CABINET
24th NOVEMBER 2015

**REPORT TITLE: VOLUNTARY AND COMMUNITY SECTOR
INFRASTRUCTURE GRANT COMMISSIONING**

Ward(s) affected by this report: Citywide

Strategic Director:	**Alison Comley** **Strategic Director, Neighbourhoods**
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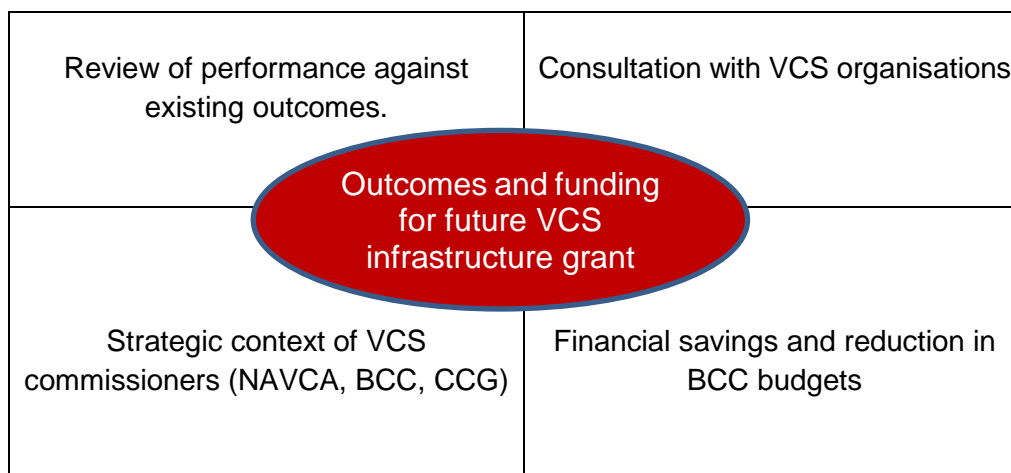
1. **Background**

1. NAVCA, the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action offers a definition of local infrastructure as follows: "The purpose of local infrastructure bodies is to provide services, support and advice to, and promote, local charities, community groups and social enterprises that deliver social action. A good infrastructure body

will offer the right mixture of support, challenge, leadership, resource, skills and knowledge. It will also help to foster relationships between the local voluntary sector, public bodies and local business. They also promote social action and make sure local communities have a voice."

2. Bristol City Council provides £453,796 a year in grant funding for infrastructure support for VCS organisations. This enables a free infrastructure support service to be offered to all VCS organisations in Bristol. The infrastructure support service is currently provided by Voscur.

3. The VCS infrastructure support currently offered is split as follows:
   - 70% of funding goes towards a "support hub" which provides training and courses in areas such as business planning, recruiting volunteers, being a good trustee etc. Specialist and intensive support is also offered to VCS organisations through the support hub;
   - 30% of funding goes towards the "voice and influence" service which is designed to enable the VCS to influence issues of importance to the sector and to enable organisations in specific working areas to share experiences and approaches and work together to influence policy and decision making.

4. The nature of infrastructure support in Bristol has changed over the last 10 years. Prior to 2010, infrastructure support was provided by six different organisations. In 2009, in consultation with commissioners and the voluntary and community sector, a new commissioning strategy for VCS infrastructure was developed resulting in all infrastructure support being provided within a single service, which was implemented in February 2011. The service was commissioned for 3 years with an option to extend for a further 2 years. No financial savings were made when the infrastructure support became a single service - the strategy's aim was to improve the support for the voluntary sector.

5. In 2013 a review took place of the infrastructure service. It was agreed that the service would be extended until 2016. At the same time, it was acknowledged that the way that the service was monitored was not suitable because there were too many performance indicators, many of which were no longer directly relevant to the service. The outcomes were reviewed and revised to allow the service to adapt to a changing environment, and the new outcomes were implemented in 2014.

6. In December 2014 Cabinet gave its agreement to the development of the prospectus - a strategic, cross-council model of revenue grant funding with clear priorities for the council's grant investment in order to tackle the city's key challenges. The prospectus is currently being consulted on, and is likely to result in changes in the way that grants are commissioned. It will be essential to ensure that VCS infrastructure support is available to the sector prior to and during these changes.

Approach to re-commissioning the VCS infrastructure grant

7. In order to determine the outcomes required and the funding recommendations for the future VCS infrastructure grant, four different elements were considered:

Review of performance against existing outcomes.	Consultation with VCS organisations
Outcomes and funding for future VCS infrastructure grant	
Strategic context of VCS commissioners (NAVCA, BCC, CCG)	Financial savings and reduction in BCC budgets

Review of performance against existing outcomes

8. We have reviewed the performance and monitoring data against the existing outcomes which have given us a good picture of the numbers of organisations and individuals that have benefitted from the support hub and the voice and influence work.

9. Looking forward to the newly commissioned service, we will be seeking to better understand and demonstrate the lasting and ongoing impact of the work including what the benefit for citizens has been and whether the work has resulted in a stronger and more resilient VCS.

Consultation with the VCS

10. It was very important to hear what the VCS had to say about the service that they were receiving, and consultation took place between June and September 2015. There were three ways for the VCS to take part:
   - Survey Monkey survey
   - Face to face events to talk in more detail about experiences with the VCS infrastructure service.
   - Targeted outreach work with small and medium sized organisations and organisations representing equalities groups, particularly groups that were not currently using the infrastructure service.

11. The feedback from the consultation is contained within appendix 1. In summary the main feedback was
   - Support hub, training, one-to-one support is important to organisations, but access needs to be modernised and more use made of digital methods of communication and sharing information.
   - The size of the organisation determined whether and how infrastructure support services were accessed. Many smaller organisations told us they had not accessed services because they could not attend events and training due to lack of staff time, whereas some of the bigger organisations mainly took part in the voice and influence activities as their need for support services was minimal. In general, the consultation feedback was in favour of proportionately reducing the level of funding for 'voice and influence' work and increasing the proportionate funding for the 'support hub' (increasing the

resources for the Support Hub from 70 to 80%).
- There were many requests for more networking / facilitated connections between local and/or similar orgs that is not currently provided.
- Most organisations told us that they felt that more online options are needed, and that better communication is needed about what is available and to whom.

Strategic context of VCS infrastructure (NAVCA, BCC, CCG)

12. A recent report by NAVCA ('Change for Good') has focussed on how VCS infrastructure is funded and delivered in the new landscape of recession and reduced local authority funding. The report recognises that 'The Infrastructure of the future is likely to be a much leaner enabler, broker and catalyst rather than necessarily a deliverer.' In a climate where organisations do not have the resources to pay for services and advice, there is a need for a stream of funding to facilitate this and future investment needs to 'deliver capacity by unlocking social capital and leverage'.

13. The report found that the sector 'is so busy coping with the problems of today that it often lacks the foresight to adapt to change effectively' and that too few understand the scale of change still to come as a result of public sector cutbacks or wider societal factors. The report recommends that local infrastructure organisations should make sure they have the necessary skills in areas including navigating change, focusing scarce resources and demonstrating their value.

14. There is support within BCC and the CCG to continue to fund an infrastructure service, particularly in light of the changes that will be made with the introduction of the prospectus. Given the financial climate in the public sector, there is a clear need for the VCS to really explore sharing costs and implement alternative funding models, and a clear need for the infrastructure service to be modernised and for better collaborative relationships to be built within the sector and between the sector and its partners. Feedback from commissioners highlighted the following things:
- Quality of funding bids and associated paperwork can still be very poor and more support is needed for VCS organisations to level the playing field.
- More support could be provided to help VCS organisations to not rely entirely on grants moving forward – this is unlikely to be stable in the long term.
- Tighter monitoring is needed as it's not clear exactly what impact the VCS infrastructure service is having on the outcomes.
- More online resources are needed, with more intuitive support

Financial considerations

15. No cuts have been made to the amount of funding invested in the VCS infrastructure support in the last 10 years.

16. Moving forward, in line with the report by NAVCA on the future of infrastructure support, there needs to be more of an emphasis on leveraging people and resources to contribute to the provision of support to the VCS. This could include partnerships with small businesses, sharing services with other organisations (e.g. IT, HR), exploring fees and charges for some services, and seeking to extend in-kind support with businesses and other organisations.

17. There are opportunities for efficiency savings to be made from the current level of grant funding, for example through a shift to digital services, reduction in venue and

catering expenses, reductions in printed matter, etc.

The proposal:

18. This report proposes that the re-commissioning process for VCS infrastructure commences in December 2015 for the new service to be in place in May 2016. The proposal is for the grant period to be over 4 years with an option to extend for a further year in line with the proposed prospectus model.

19. The proposed outcomes describe what this grant funding aims to achieve and deliver. These outcomes reflect the monitoring outcomes, the consultation with the VCS, the strategic context and the financial climate, and are set out in the table below:

Outcome	Proposed areas to monitor against
Theme A: Provide practical support for VCS organisations that further the priorities of the Bristol Vision priorities and the Prospectus vision.	
Outcome 1: VCS organisations are more able to raise additional funding to develop and deliver their services.	1.1 Amount of funding that VCS organisations have been supported or enabled to raise from contracts and grants and other financial opportunities.
Outcome 2: VCS organisations have more capacity to run their services more efficiently and effectively.	2.1 Percentage of VCS groups who have received advice and training reporting increased capacity.
	2.2 Number of organisations that reflect the Bristol Vision priorities and address the key challenges of the VCS Prospectus that are in crisis (linked to finances or governance) that are assisted to increase their resilience and sustainability.
	2.3 Support services are well published and delivered in a variety of ways that are accessible to all VCS organisations and are delivered in a way that minimises time and resources expended.
	2.4 VCS organisations are supported to be able to contribute to the values of the VCS Grants Prospectus.
Outcome 3: VCS organisations develop or evolve to meet gaps in service provision.	3.1 Number of VCS organisations that have identified gaps that receive comprehensive start-up support reporting increased capacity.
	3.2 Number of organisations that have been assisted to evolve to provide services that fill identified gaps reporting increased capacity.
Theme B: Strengthen the relationships within the sector and across other sectors in Bristol [to further the priorities of the Bristol vision and the Prospectus vision].	
Outcome 4: Bristol VCS organisations know how and where to access appropriate VCS infrastructure support.	4.1 Evidence of increased collaboration with relevant VCS Infrastructure support services.
	4.2 VCS organisations are triaged and linked to appropriate infrastructure support according to the client group or sector they work with or in.
	4.3 Relevant and pertinent news and info for VCS organisations in Bristol is provided in a variety means.

Outcome	Proposed areas to monitor against

Outcome 5: VCS organisations develop collaborative solutions	5.1 Evidence of support to organisations to share information and good practice:
	    i. Between organisations of a similar size;
	    ii. Between organisations with a similar client group / aim / geography;
	    iii. Between organisations with similar backgrounds e.g. BME orgs.

	5.2 Evidence of support to VCS organisations to share resources – e.g. IT, HR, premises and admin.
	5.3 Evidence of support to VCS organisations to build consortia inside and outside of the sector to access different, more sustainable funding and to deliver better outcomes to citizens.
	5.4 Evidence of support to VCS organisations to share clients and pathways.
Theme C: Promote and maximise opportunities for the VCS to influence, join together with and share outcomes with other organisations in the city	
Outcome 6: The Bristol VCS actively contributes to policy changes, strategic development, service re-design and commissioning in the city.	6.1 Evidence of enabling representation of the VCS in relevant policy, strategy and service conversations in the city – at the right time and at the right level.
	6.2 Evidence of enabling VCS organisations to work with commissioners to understand the capacity of the VCS to deliver services and demonstrate the leverage and social value that can be offered by the VCS.
	6.3 Evidence of providing communications and briefings on key topics affecting the sector and the citizens the sector serves.

20. There is a need for better monitoring of the impact of this grant – some of the monitoring information that we currently have focusses on outputs rather than the difference that the funding has made to VCS organisations and citizens. The council will work with the successful organisation to agree the detail of this monitoring, but it will be essential in the future to demonstrate through more robust monitoring both outputs and impact against the outcomes and will involve VCS organisations.

21. The level of funding will be reduced over the four year period, with an expectation that the successful organisation will develop and share a business development strategy to:
- Work with partners to address unmet needs;
- Explore alternative and innovative sources of core funding;
- Identify and implement efficiency savings.

22. It is proposed that the reduction in funding commences in year 3 of the 4-year grant period, a year after the prospectus comes into place, and that the funding is reduced by between 15% and 20% over the grant period. The amount of the funding reduction would be confirmed in year two of the grant period and would be done in discussion with the successful organisation. This will give the organisation time to plan effectively to absorb the bulk of this reduction as efficiency savings and to leverage additional resources to minimise service disruption. The below tables show what the funding reduction would look like for a 15% and 20% reduction.

a. 15% reduction over the grant period

Year	April 2016- Mar 2017	April 2017 – Mar 2018	April 2018-Mar 2019	April 2019 – Mar 2020
Proposed funding	£453,796	£453,796	£417,492	£385,727
£ reduction for year	£0	£0	£36,304	£31,765
% reduction for year	0%	0%	8%	8%
£ reduction cumulative	£0	£0	£36,304	£68,069
% reduction cumulative	0%	0%	8%	15%

b. 20% reduction over the grant period

Year	April 2016- Mar 2017	April 2017 – Mar 2018	April 2018-Mar 2019	April 2019 – Mar 2020
Proposed funding	£453,796	£453,796	£408,416	£363,037
£ reduction for year	£0	£0	£45,380	£45,379
% reduction for year	0%	0%	10%	12%
£ reduction cumulative	£0	£0	£45,380	£90,759
% reduction cumulative	0%	0%	10%	20%

23. There will be an expectation that the successful organisation will maximise the opportunity to provide quality digital services and take full advantage of modern digital engagement and communication options. In addition to this, the successful organisation will need to show that they are working with the VCS to put in place sustainable networks and materials that VCS organisations can access and use on their own without the need for support from the infrastructure organisation.

24. The commissioning timetable proposed is as follows:

Commissioning VCS Infrastructure support	From	To
Cabinet approval	24th Nov 2015	-
Application process open	7th Dec 2015	21st Jan 2015
Grants evaluation	22nd Jan 2016	12 Feb 2016
Grants decision communicated to applicants	19th Feb 2016	-
Decommissioning protocol (if a different organisation is chosen to deliver the infrastructure service)	19th Feb 2016	23th May 2016
Commencement of new period of grant funding	23rd May 2016	31st March 2020

Consultation and scrutiny input:

a.   **Internal consultation:**
    Consultation with commissioning managers (July 2015)

Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Commission (Nov 2015)
Executive member

b.   External consultation:
Consultation with commissioning managers (CCG Sep 2015)
Consultation with VCS (July – Sept 2015)

Other options considered:
a.   Continue to grant fund at the same level with the same outcomes.
The evidence from the monitoring does not show us what the impact of 10 years of funding has been, and therefore maintaining the same levels of funding can't be justified. There is an opportunity to use the reduction in funding to encourage more innovative ways to approach core funding and delivery of services.

b.   Change the outcomes but continue to grant fund at the same level.
This was rejected for the same reasons as above in terms of the funding level, and the outcomes are being changed in the option that we are proposing.

Risk management / assessment:
The risks associated with this are outlined below:

FIGURE 1
The risks associated with the implementation of the *(subject) decision* :

No.	RISK	INHERENT RISK (Before controls)		RISK CONTROL MEASURES	CURRENT RISK (After controls)		RISK OWNER
	Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	Impact	Probability	Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	Impact	Probability	
1	The reduction in funding will reduce the level of support available to the VCS in the city and reduce the impact of VCS services for citizens.	**High**	**Medium**	The proposals and outcomes are seeking to increase efficiency of delivery and seek to leverage additional resources in years three and four. There is also a proposal to proportionately reduce the level of funding on 'voice and influence' and a proportionate increase in 'support hub' funding.	**High**	**Low**	Di Robinson

FIGURE 2
The risks associated with not implementing the *(subject) decision*:

No.	RISK	INHERENT RISK (Before controls)		RISK CONTROL MEASURES	CURRENT RISK (After controls)		RISK OWNER
	Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	Impact	Probability	Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	Impact	Probability	
1	The absence of VCS Infrastructure service will impact on the roll-out of the VCS prospectus and the ability of organisations to apply for funding for innovative services that have a positive impact on deprived communities disproportionately affected by the recession	**High**	**High**	There are few local alternatives to accessing this type of free advice and will rely on organisations seeking this elsewhere.	**High**	**High**	Di Robinson

FIGURE 2							
The risks associated with <u>not</u> implementing the *(subject) decision*:							
No.	RISK	INHERENT RISK		RISK CONTROL MEASURES	CURRENT RISK		RISK OWNER
	Threat to achievement of the key objectives of the report	(Before controls)		Mitigation (ie controls) and Evaluation (ie effectiveness of mitigation).	(After controls)		
		Impact	Probability		Impact	Probability	
2	The absence of VCS Infrastructure service will impact on the ability of VCS organisations to compete on a level playing field in commissioning programmes and diminish the potential market.	High	High	There are few local alternatives to accessing this type of free advice and will rely on organisations seeking this elsewhere.	**High**	**High**	Di Robinson
3	The absence of VCS Infrastructure service could impact on the ability of the VCS to work together effectively to lever other finding and resources into the city to provide services for the citizens of Bristol	High	High	There are few local alternatives to accessing this type of free advice and will rely on organisations seeking this elsewhere.	**High**	**High**	Di Robinson

Public sector equality duties:
A full EqIA has been completed for the VCS Grants Infrastructure grant commissioning proposal (Appendix 2). The VCS infrastructure service contributes to the public sector equality duty by supporting VCS organisations who deliver services to some of our most disadvantaged citizens and we know that discrimination is a factor contributing to disadvantage.

During the consultation which helped to inform the future outcomes for this grant, additional resource from the community development team was identified to ensure that VCS organisations delivering to equalities groups were fully represented in the consultation. 30% of organisations taking part in the consultation were equalities-led and/or delivering to equalities communities, and this shows that equalities groups have had a clear voice in shaping the proposals within this report.

We will work with the successful organisation closely to agree how the proposed reduction in funding will be realised. The consultation has told us that organisations value the practical support over the voice and influence work, and that forging better local networks is also a priority. Supporting organisations to work in ways that increase the opportunities for people from different backgrounds and experiences to come together to increase understanding will remain a priority, as will working in ways that address inequality and discrimination.

Eco impact assessment
The proposal to recommission the VCS infrastructure support service will not have significant direct environmental impacts (positive or negative) in itself, however it is likely that some indirect positive environmental impacts will arise if the result is a shift to more digital services, and organisations sharing resources such as buildings which will save energy & related emissions
Advice given by   Claire Craner-Buckley, Environmental Project Manager (need to confirm)
Date   22/10/15

Resource and legal implications:

Finance

   a. Financial (revenue) implications:

The revenue implications of the recommendation are set out in section 23 of the report. The intention is for the revenue budget to be maintained at its existing level of approximately £454k for financial years 2016/17 and 2017/18 and then to reduce by between £36k and £45k in 2018/19 and then between a further £32k and £45k in 2019/20.

Advice given by   Robin Poole
Date   24/10/15

b. Financial (capital) implications: Not applicable

c. Legal implications:
   i.   State Aid
      The level of funding proposed would suggest a risk that this grant would or could amount to provision of state aid. Charities, social or community organisations, or awards for the purpose of providing social benefit, are not exempt from the EU State Aid Rules. For it to be State Aid the answer to each of the following questions will be yes:
      1   Is the assistance/funding coming from public resources?
      2   Will it give an potential advantage to one or more undertakings over others?
      3   Does it distort or have the potential to distort competition?
      4   Does it affect trade between Member States?

      In my view the answer to the first two questions above is yes. On the third, there is a market for provision of business support services such as those envisaged in this Report and the grant of such funding could distort that competition. This is especially so in light of the potential for the successful applicant to charge for some of its services. The fact that the purpose is to benefit VCS organisations only local to Bristol, however, suggests strongly that provision of the grant is unlikely to attract international applicants and if so, then it would not amount to EU State Aid.

   ii.   Public Contract Regulations 2015
      Provided this arrangement falls within the scope of a Grant Agreement, and does not amount to a contract for services then the Public Contract Regulations will not apply.

      A Grant is where the Council provides money (and/or assets) to an organisation on trust to use for a specific purpose.   The organisation is not obliged to deliver any services or goods, but will be obliged to repay to the Council any part of the grant that has not been spent on the purpose for which it was given (often referred to as a claw back).   The successful applicant for the grant must have the freedom to determine now to spend the grant in fulfilling the purpose. Care will need to be taken in drafting the purpose for the funding in the Grant Agreement so as not to be too prescription on the how the funds are to be used, to avoid the arrangement falling into a type of contract instead of a genuine grant.

The Council is advised to apply the EU procurement principles of equal treatment, transparency and proportionality for the selection process for the successful applicant.

iii. **Transfer of Undertakings (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006 (TUPE)**
There are no TUPE implications on the council's staffing but TUPE will need to be borne in mind in the course of advertising the grant application process. In the event that Voscur does not apply for, or is not awarded, the grant there may be a TUPE transfer of Voscur's employees to the successful applicant.

Advice given by   Jane Johnson
Date   10 November 2015

d. Land / property implications:

None

Advice given by
Date   **22/10/15**

e. Human resources implications:
Not applicable.

Appendices:
Appendix 1 – Consultation feedback
Appendix 2 - EqIA

Access to information (background papers):
NAVCA report, 'Change for Good'
Full monitoring report

VCS Infrastructure Consultation

BCC Internal – June 2015
- Meeting with BCC commissioners who work with VCS
- Feedback from Public Health commissioners who work with VCS
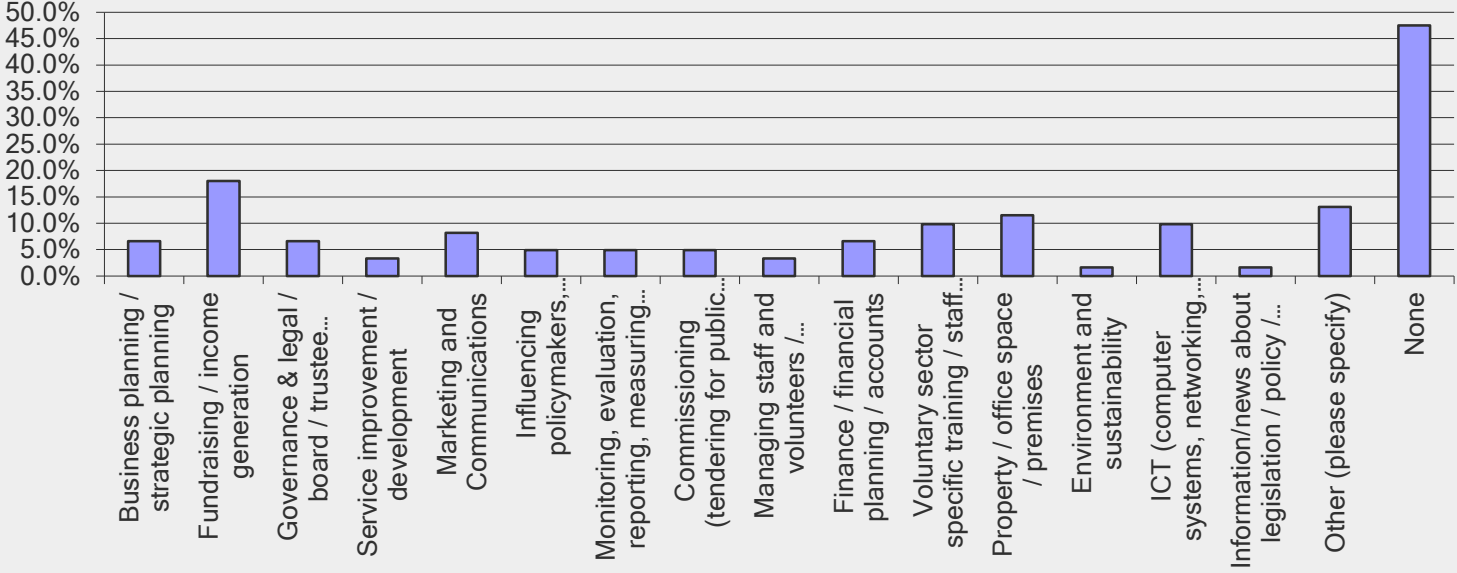
VCS organisations

The consultation was conducted during the 6th July to the 30th September, and the following events and attendance/responses were recorded:
- Six events with a geographical spread around the city a varied times – 16 organisations attended these events
- Survey Monkey – responses from 72 organisations
- Community development team engagement with medium and small VCS organisations – 27 organisations/forums engaged with at which 100 individuals were present

Question	Consultation response
Are there any areas of support that you have needed in the last few years but have not been able to get this from the VCS Support Hub? If there were, where did you get the support from? What reason were you given by the Support Hub as to why you were not able to receive support?	**VCS Consultation events 1-6 (event identified in brackets)** • 'Funder Finder' no longer available and being replace by something more limited which is still under development (3); • Changes in legislation and policy (nationally and locally used to be communicated in briefings by VCS Infrastructure (3); • Many individuals, often from BME communities want to set up not for profit businesses and want to link up with like-minded people who want to do similar things (3); • HR Support, Financial Support, IT Support – advice on software etc. Need more specialist support. (4); • Courses often generic, not specialist. Have ltd time to attend courses, want specialist advice (4); • Needs to act as an enabler/broker to bring organisation together for contacts (4); • Assumed that specialist info not provided (4); • There is not a strategic join up with some sectors/infrastructure areas e.g. health & advice (1) + (4); • we are equalities and have to go direct to the council; Why is equalities not included in subgroups/forums? Review networks(4) Note: To be considered in Prospectus; • Networks – #### works across all three but are in no position to attend all three and therefore out of the loop (6).
	Community Development – small and grass-roots groups 13 Medium groups: • Bring together similar types of organisations who are facing similar challenges. This could be in terms of mentoring, skills and knowledge swaps. • Specific HR, IT and property advice (Specialist advice) • If not provided have either sought professional services or been signposted elsewhere

Question	Consultation response
	Survey Monkey – on-line survey There were 61 responses to this question. The responses are shown in the graph below: **Are there any areas of support that you have needed in the last few years but have not been able to get this from the VCS Support Hub? Tick any you have not been able to access.** Text responses: • Unaware of the support hub and the services provided • More facilitation support in developing partnerships with private companies etc • Community buildings network and specific community buildings training • Specific HR support • Specific support for the advice sector All of these responses have been covered in the points in the right hand margin or are reflected in the outcomes. When asked if you were unable to get this support where did you get it from? Reponses from 43 organisations were:

Question	Consultation response
	If you were unable to get support from the VCS Support Hub, what reason was given by the Support Hub for not providing this support? 70.0% 60.0% 50.0% 40.0% 30.0% 20.0% 10.0% 0.0% Did not qualify for support This service was not provided by the Support Hub Did not ask specifically for this support Other

Question	Consultation response
Access to services: a. Do you feel that the current 'support hub' and 'voice and influence' services are accessible to your organisation/equalities led organisations? b. Are there any ways that you can suggest that would make the services more accessible to your organisation/equalities led organisations and their service users?	Unsure whether diverse voices are heard (3) Issues for organisations staffed or run by people whose first language is not English and are usually digitally excluded. (6) Stigma around some issues stop some people engaging e.g. Somali parents – only view of engagement with the council is about housing benefit, school or taking children into care (6) Yes but difficult for smaller organisations due to capacity (time & resources), other modes of communication access to be used e.g. tweeting (6) Have heard other organisations say they struggle to access services: seems to have been through lack of capacity within the organisation rather than the service itself. Even accessing free services takes investment of time & effort.(3)
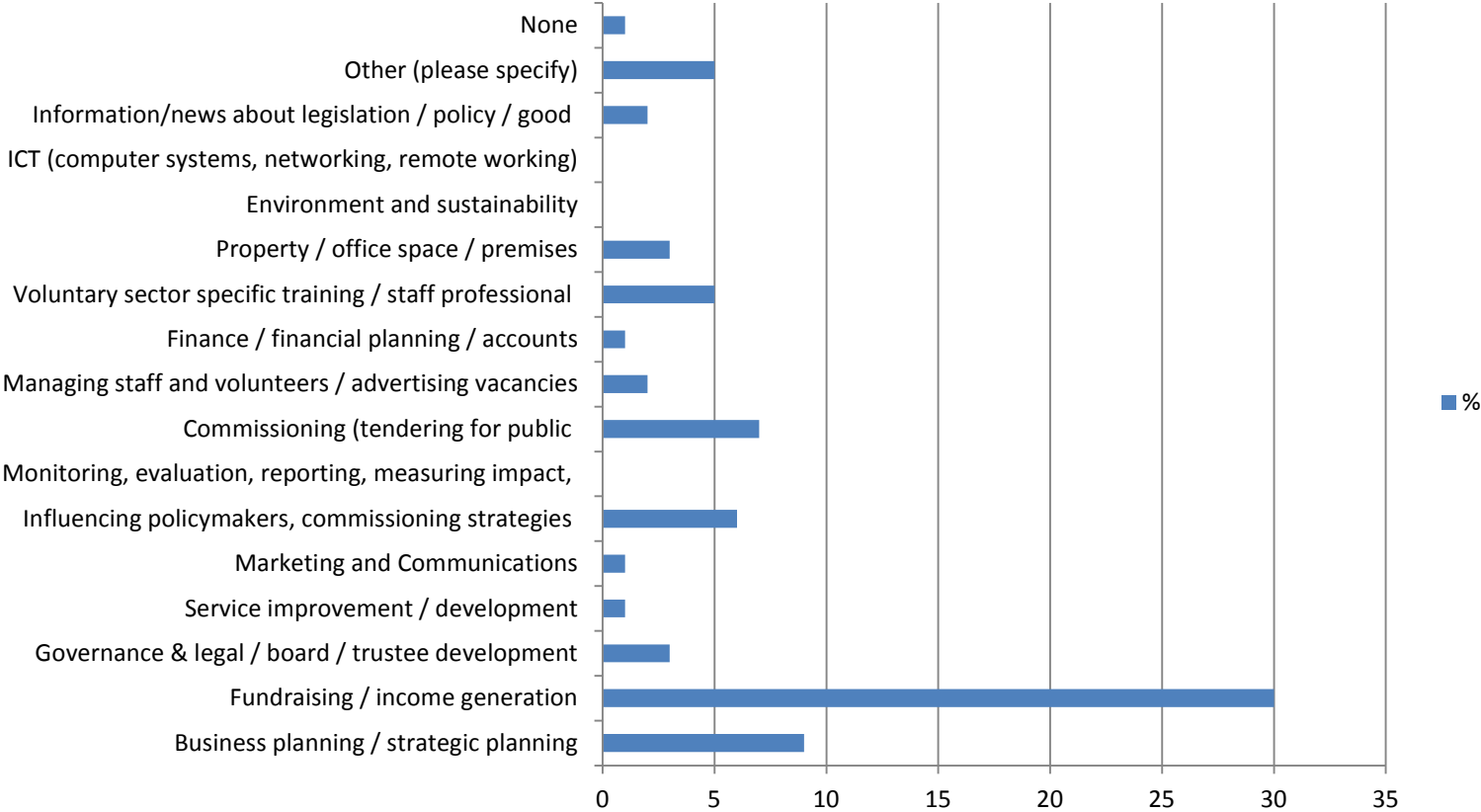
Question	Consultation response
	Community Development – small and grass-roots groups 13 small groups: 62% of groups felt that the services were accessible for them Comments on improving access to equalities or community groups: • Provision of crèche facilities • Use of plain English in communications • Services are centrally based and not accessible for small groups on the edge of the city 15 Grass-roots organisations: Comments on improving access to equalities or community groups: • A few of organisations had positive experiences of accessing support • Generally a lack of awareness about what services are available • Training booking inflexible and poor communication • Community buildings forum was useful but no longer runs
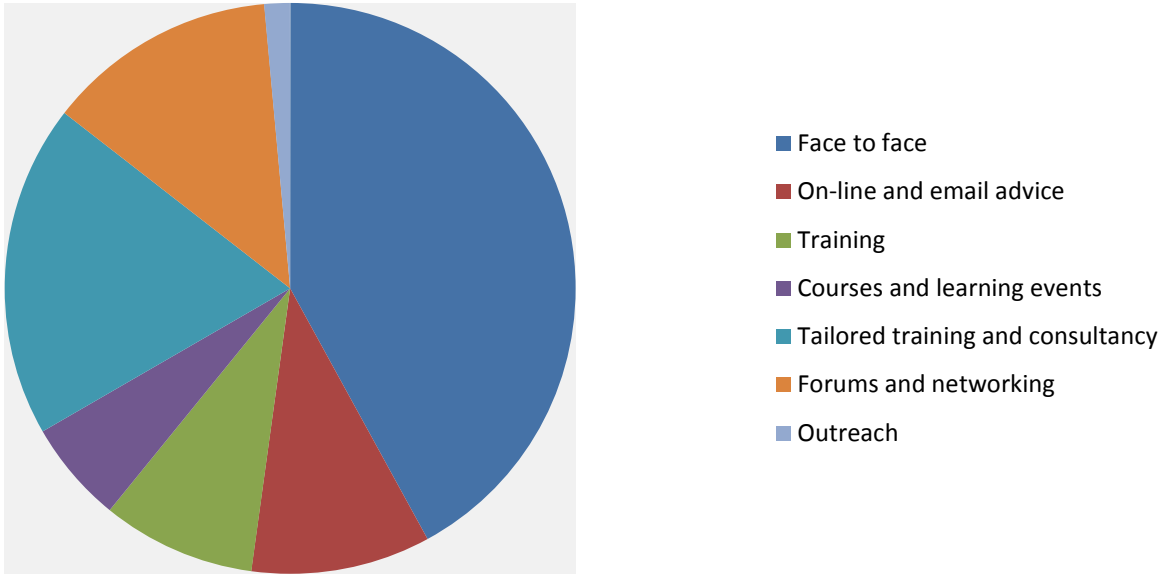
Question	Consultation response
Access to start up services Have any of you needed support to establish yourselves as an organisation and needed help in the following areas: • The need and purpose of your group; • Different organisation structures/how they are managed; • Funding, finance and how to get money; • Developing policies and procedures; • Marketing and publicity; • Being influential, action planning and further support?	**Access to 'Start-up' services for grass-roots groups (14 groups)** Have any of you needed support to establish yourselves as an organisation and needed help in the following areas: | Support area	%	No responding
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The need and purpose of your group;	36	14
Different organisation structures/how they are managed;	21	14
Funding, finance and how to get money;	93	14
Developing policies and procedures;	57	14
Marketing and publicity;	43	14
Being influential, action planning and further support?	29	14
If so, have you been able to access this type of support from the Support Hub?	100	5	
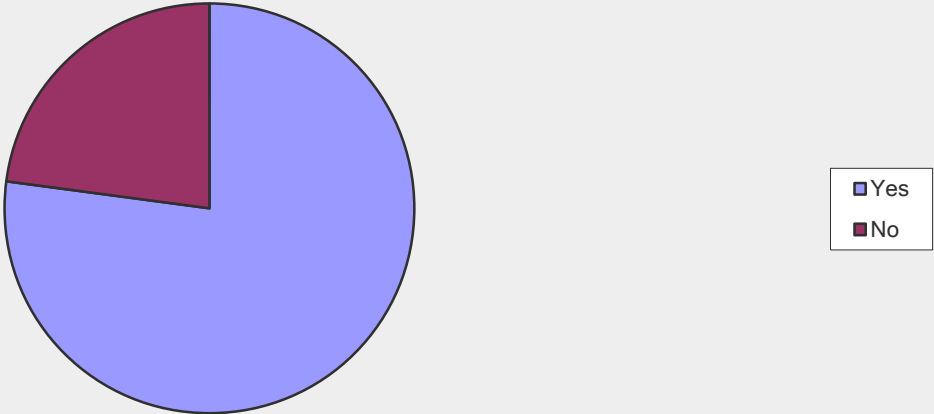
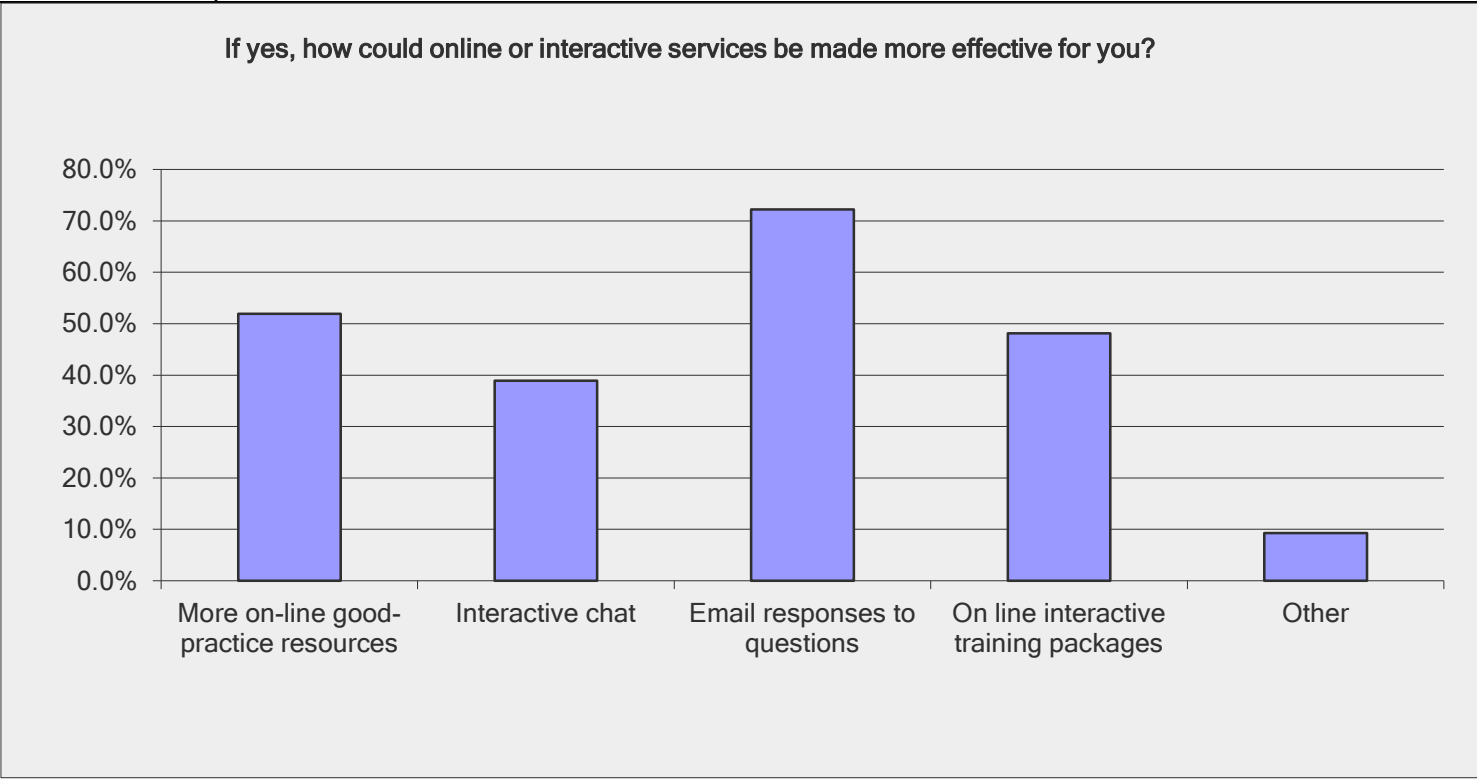| Question	Consultation response
Prioritising support Do organisations feel that this approach is: • a. fair? and • b. meets the needs of the city?	Remove established (4) More resources for intensive support (4) Agreed as sensible and fair (6) Resources are better targeted at those with least – so long as they can show a proportionate impact.(3)
	Community Development – small and grass-roots groups 13 small groups: • 69% felt that this approach is fair • 62% felt it met the needs of the city 15 grass-roots organisations: • 40% felt that this approach is fair (8 responded, 7 had no view) • 47% felt it met the needs of the city (8 responded, 7 had no view)
	Bristol City Council Commissioners Should be in plain English
Balance of resources Would you prefer this to change so that there are more resources for: a) The Support Hub? b) The Voice and Influence work?	Reduction of numbers attending network and assembly – is this less groups or less time? (3) Difficult to gauge without knowing what the demand is (3) Relies on the input of larger organisations giving time e.g. advocates (3) More info needed on demand before making informed response to this (4) Increasing capacity building and expand into CICs etc (4) feel that the balance is about right (6) For larger organisations V&I is more important as the support services can be bought commercially (3)

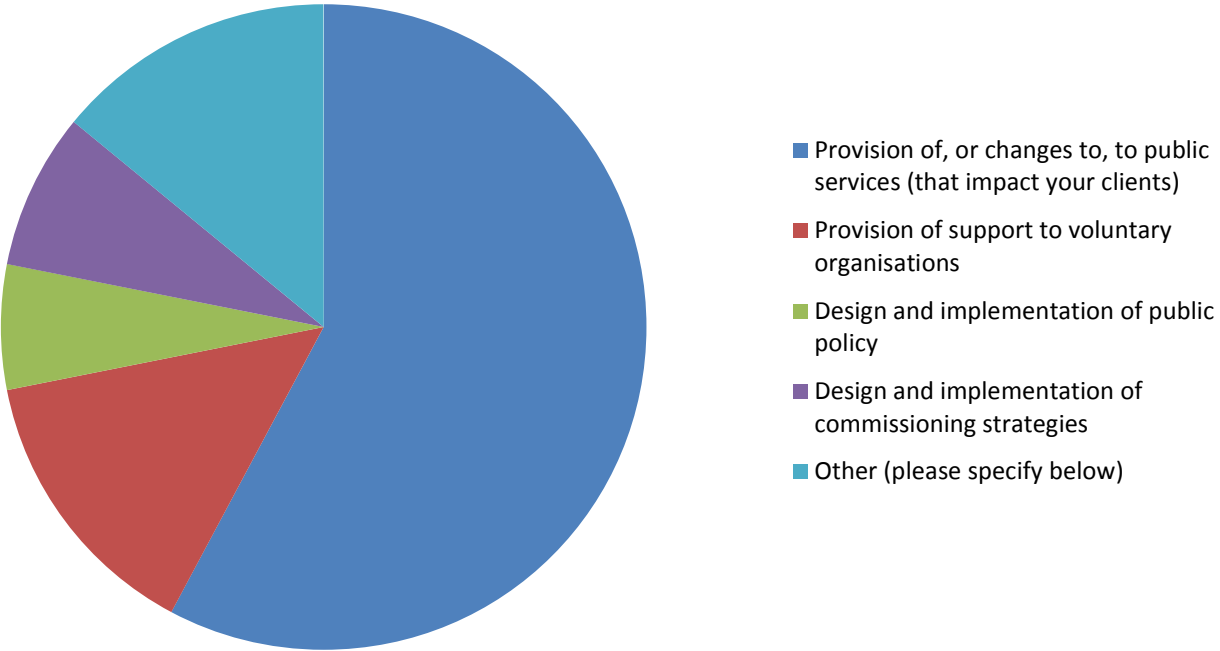| Question	Consultation response
	Community Development – small groups (8 responded) Support Hub 13% Voice and influence 25% Stay the same 63%
	Bristol City Council Commissioners More resources for the support Hub (80/20 split?) response from procurement, community buildings & commissioners **BCC Public health –** more resources to help organisations demonstrate their impact.
	On-line survey – 38 responded Support Hub – 60% Voice and Influence – 40%

General Feedback	The VCS Infrastructure service does not engage with or support advice sector organisations (1)
	The VCS Infrastructure service should host partnership networks to enable organisations to form consortia/partnerships for specific tenders (1)
	Advocates struggle with engagement with the sector and there needs to be clear information given to the sector on:
	    1. What is coming up
	    2. Who do I influence
	Do not feel that the VCS Infrastructure service links people to the business sector (3)+ (6)
	Smaller VCS groups unaware of VCS Infrastructure and what it provides outside the 'professional VCS sector (3)
	Ensure that any legal advice given is indemnified (3)
	Need for greater Horizon scanning to input back to specific sectors (4) (linked to what is not provided) + (3) +
	Greater number of advocates needed to cover wider service areas (4)
	Monitoring of VCS Infrastructure service should be publically available (4)
	Capacity to engage – needs to minimise time taken to feed into (6).
	V&I - Do not feel that this is done, feel that some people's voices are heard (6)
	
	Name of organisation is strange – most other services referred to as 'CVS' (Community and Voluntary Sector) (6)
	Linked to language in general of VCS Infrastructure not intelligible to smaller organisations (4)
	Like to see the strategic picture for volunteering support sorted out in the city (3)

	Bristol City Council **BCC Procurement –** consider exploring different means of delivering the service given the reduction in public funding. Can there be more work done in conjunction with Small and Medium Enterprises? **BCC Safeguarding** In recent commissioning rounds the children's and adult safeguarding policies have been poor there is a need for

Question	Consultation response
	provision for the service to help VCS organisations to produce and instigate them. Time courses to link with commissioning rounds. **Commissioners** • More help to the sector with fundraising support • Reduce time for organisation to attend events by producing podcasts and more online resources • There should be a protocol for BCC officer to refer organisation to the support Hub • There should be more support provided for organisations to be supported around volunteering such as supervising retaining volunteers, BDS checks etc • Need Impact tool/outcome star to monitor progress of organisations • More support on collaborative bids

Question	Consultation response
Additional Information from the online survey	The highest priority operational area is for support in Fundraising and income generations, followed by business planning, influencing policy/commissioning strategies and Tendering (60 responded):

What area of operational support will be your highest priority in the next three years?

Category	%
None	1
Other (please specify)	5
Information/news about legislation / policy / good	2
ICT (computer systems, networking, remote working)	0
Environment and sustainability	0
Property / office space / premises	3
Voluntary sector specific training / staff professional	5
Finance / financial planning / accounts	1
Managing staff and volunteers / advertising vacancies	2
Commissioning (tendering for public	7
Monitoring, evaluation, reporting, measuring impact,	0
Influencing policymakers, commissioning strategies	6
Marketing and Communications	1
Service improvement / development	1
Governance & legal / board / trustee development	3
Fundraising / income generation	30
Business planning / strategic planning	9

Question	Consultation response
	How would you prefer to receive capacity building support for your organisation?

Legend:
- Face to face
- On-line and email advice
- Training
- Courses and learning events
- Tailored training and consultancy
- Forums and networking
- Outreach

However, when stated,' There is a limit to the resources to support VCS organisations. Would your organisation be able make use of more on-line support? (this would allow a greater number of organisations to be supported), there was acceptance to use more on-line resources (70 responses):

Question	Consultation response
	There is a limit to the resources to support VCS organisations. Would your organisation be able make use of more on-line support? (this would allow a greater number of organisations to be supported)

Yes
No

If yes, how could online or interactive services be made more effective for you (54 responses)? |

Question	Consultation response
	If yes, how could online or interactive services be made more effective for you? A bar chart showing response percentages: - More on-line good-practice resources: ~52% - Interactive chat: ~39% - Email responses to questions: ~72% - On line interactive training packages: ~48% - Other: ~9%

Question	Consultation response
	Voice and Influence: What do you aim to achieve most through your voice and influencing work (68 responded)?

Reasons given for other:

We don't understand this language. It is inaccessible.
We need funding and premises
Change public opinion of refugees and asylum seekers
providing local facilities to the community
changes/improvements for the community influence through Neighbourhood Partnership and directly
Strengthen democracy and public participation in decision making over private and public bodies |

Question	Consultation response
	Improve opportunities for young people who live in poverty or are failing at school.
	Building awareness and engagement amongst policy holders, shared use of public streets amd children's
	Access to employment; Improving health and wellbeing; Supporting enterprise
	Helps with banners and posters
	Represent the community
	Helping to tailor services to the needs of the community
	Supporting the local community
	Getting Funding for our organisation
	Increasing client base
	How to reach potential trustees with the necessary skills, business, strategic planning, finance, IT
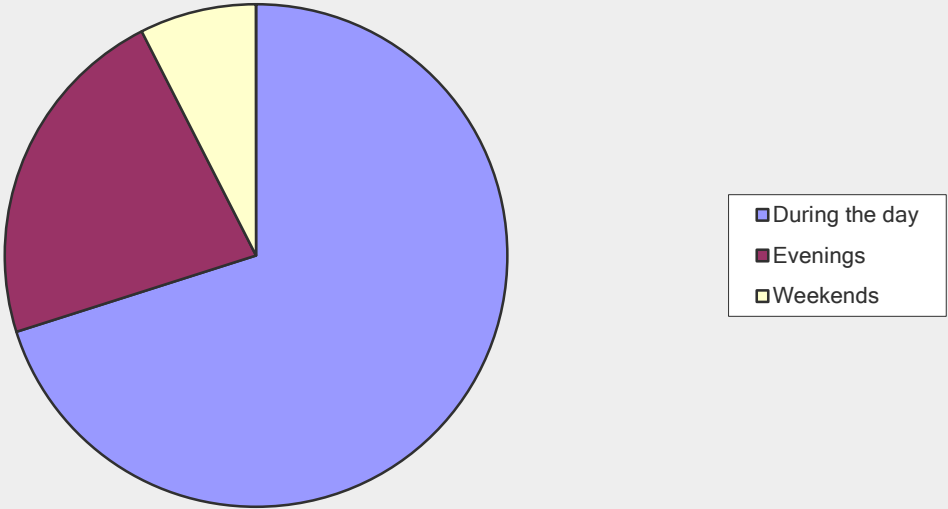
Question	Consultation response
	Preferences for receiving support: 1. **Practical support (69 responded).** When would you prefer to receive support? Legend: During the day, Evenings, Weekends 2. **Attending Voice and Influence meetings (67 responded)**
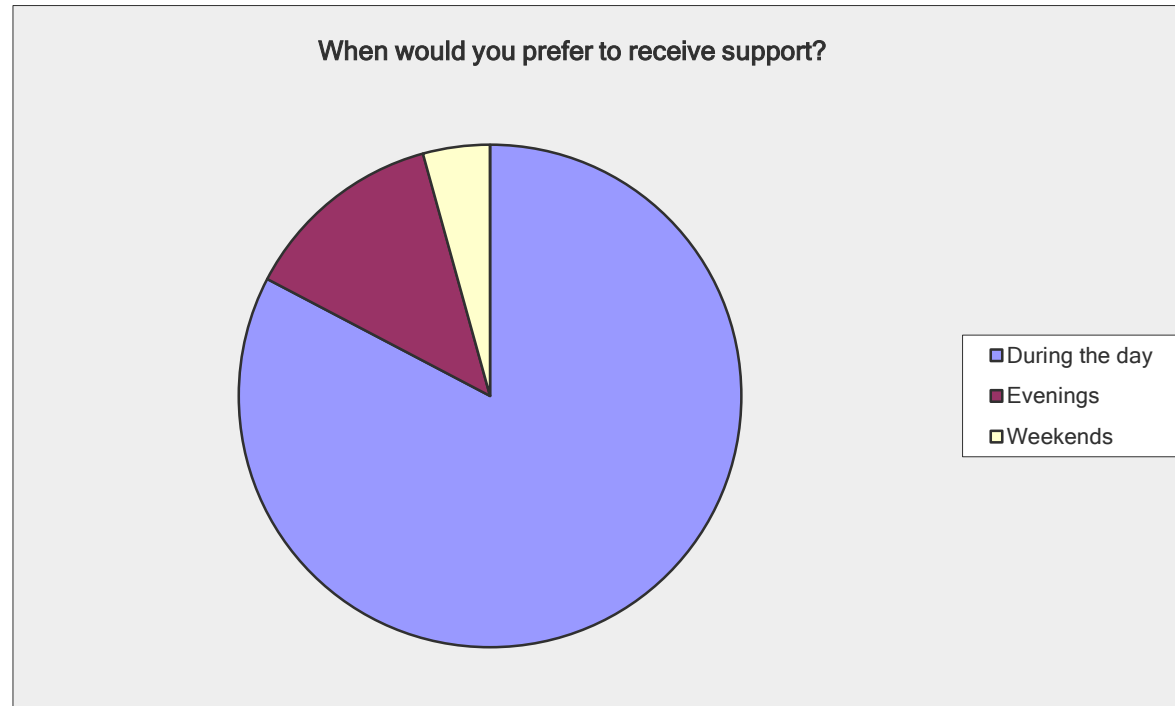
Question	Consultation response
	When would you prefer to attend voice and influence meetings? During the day Evenings Weekends

Question	Consultation response
	Common themes in responses to Outcomes: 1. **Simplify Language used** 2. **Include more joint events and working between VCS and SMEs** 3. **(Include an) outcome related to leverage** 4. **Ensure that KPIs below the outcomes link to advice in relation to properties and buildings** 5. **Include the terms 'improved communication' and 'mutual connectivity' - This relates to (5) & (16) in actions in the questions asked – Strategic co-ordination of services and (11) Improved communication - particularly for smaller groups** 6. **Break sentences up and into bullet points.**

Bristol City Council Equality Impact Assessment Form

(Please refer to the Equality Impact Assessment guidance when completing this form)

Name of proposal	VCS Infrastructure grant commissioning
Directorate and Service Area	Neighbourhoods and Place (Neighbourhoods and Communities)
Name of Lead Officer	Hywel Caddy

Step 1: What is the proposal?

1.1 What is the proposal?
The re-commissioning of the VCS Infrastructure service in the city.   1. Bristol City Council currently provides £453,796 per year in grant funding for infrastructure support for VCS organisations to enable free infrastructure support service to be offered to all VCS organisations in Bristol. The current grant agreement comes to an end in May 2016.   2. The re-commissioned service will be in place in 2016 in order to support the sector in the grants rounds resulting from the VCS Prospectus in autumn 2016.   3. The proposal is for a 4 year funding agreement, with a tapering of funding of between 15% and 20% in years 2 to 4 of the grant period.   4. The finding from the consultation also recommended a change in balance of service provision between capacity building support and 'voice and influence' from 70/30 to 80/20.   5. The proposed outcomes for the grant are based on a review of performance against existing outcomes, consulting the VCS, the strategic context and the reduction in BCC budgets.

Step 2: What information do we have?

2.1 What data or evidence is there which tells us who is, or could be affected?

Data held for 2014-15 for the current service:

Equalities data for member organisations of the current provider		
Equalities Group	Self-identifying as Equalities led	Self-identifying as serving Equalities Communities
BME	81	130
Disabled People	49	113
LGB	14	42
Older People	31	86
Women	62	101
CYP	46	163
Faith	29	66
Men	10	58
Transgender	2	34

1,575 attended training and events of which 1031 completed monitoring forms at events or training sessions:

Gender:	Number
Men	268
Women	647
Preferred not to say	116

Age:	Number
16 – 24	45

25 - 49	578
50 - 64	233
65 - 74	44
75 or over	13
Preferred not to say	118

Disabled people: (people who considered themselves to be disabled)	Number
Yes	103
No	779
Preferred not to say	149

Sexual Orientation:	Number
Bisexual	24
Lesbian or Gay	44
Heterosexual	732
Preferred not to say	231

Gender Identify: people who have said they are transgender *(a question your org. may have asked people: is your gender identity different to that assigned at birth?)*	Number
Yes	13
No	742
Preferred not to say	276

Race and Ethnicity:		Number
(a) Asian or Asian British	Bangladeshi	7
	Chinese	7
	Indian	18
	Pakistani	3
	Any other Asian background	1
(b) Black or Black British	African	36
	Caribbean	24
	Somali	11
	Any other Black background	2
(c) Any other ethnic groups	Arab	4
	Iranian	3
	Iraqi	0
	Kurdish	0
	Turkish	1
	Any other ethnic background	6
(d) Mixed/multiple ethnic groups	White and Asian	9
	White and Black African	2
	White and Black Caribbean	13
	Any other mixed/multiple background	10
(e) White	British	716
	Eastern European	11
	Gypsy	0
	Irish	6
	Irish or Scottish Traveller	1
	Roma	0
	Any other white background	64
(f) Preferred not to say	Preferred not to say	76

People of Faith:	Number
Buddhist	5
Christian	256
Hindu	2
Jewish	6
Muslim	36
Sikh	6
None	415
Don't know / not sure	46
Other faith, religion or belief	57
Preferred not to say	202

2.2 Who is missing? Are there any gaps in the data?

There is comprehensive data compiled by the current provider of the service. However, there are high levels of people ticking the 'prefer not to say' box. For example over 100 people preferred not to state their gender, which is the monitoring category which nearly 100% of people would usually complete which indicates a lack of understanding of equalities monitoring. This needs to be addressed in the newly commissioned service.

2.3 How have we involved, or will we involve, communities and groups that could be affected?

The current provider has stated the following about involvement:
Events are promoted through:
- the Voscur website;
- e-bulletin;
- Twitter;
- Facebook;
- Thrive! Newsletter;
- targeted direct emails;
- flyers;
- Ujima radio and BCFM;
- at network events;
- The Care Forum;
- Disability Equality Forum;

- Bristol BME Voice and Influence;
- AgeUK;
- LGBT Forum;
- Neighbourhood publications.

Accessibility:
All events are held in accessible venues. At the time of booking, participants are asked about any specific access requirements, eg hearing loop. Administration staff ensure that these needs are met on the day. The provider endeavours to rotate meetings around the City in order to ensure that they are accessible to different neighbourhoods and communities. Events are scheduled, as far as possible, to take into account religious observance, caring responsibilities and transport availability.

BCC undertook a 12 week consultation to ask the voluntary sector in Bristol what support they need to ensure that they can thrive and contribute to the needs of the city. The consultation was carried out in a variety of ways:

- Survey Monkey survey;
- Face to face events to talk in more detail about experiences with the VCS infrastructure service;
- Targeted outreach work with small and medium sized organisations some of whom were run by or for equalities groups, the BCC funded equalities forums, and groups that were not currently using the infrastructure service.

Information was sent out about the consultation through:

- the Voscur website;
- All funded and non-funded VCS organisations linked to BCC ;
- targeted direct emails at equalities groups;
- flyers;
- at the VCS assembly;
- The Care Forum;
- Consultation Finder;
- Neighbourhood Partnerships;
- The Community Development Team.

The issue of access to services was explored further in the consultation.

In the online survey, of the 72 groups who responded, the following number of organisations responded that they are run by or for the following group or

community and fully completed the survey:
Age - 7
Disability - 3
Ethnicity - 10
Gender 0
Transgender - 0
Pregnancy & maternity - 2
Religion and belief - 2
Sexual orientation – 0

The community development team also held focus groups with the equality forums.

There was also feedback from the BCC Equality and Community Cohesion Team from a discussion with Black South West Network meeting.

Step 3: Who might the proposal impact?

3.1 Does the proposal have any potentially adverse impacts on people with protected characteristics?

From the data collected by the provider about access to current services:
From the data provided by the current provider, the following protected characteristic areas are under-represented in the take up of events and training compared to census 2011 data:
- Older people and younger people
- Disabled people are slightly under represented

However, this is a reflection characteristic of individuals attending rather than the access to the service for organisations. The current provider has high levels of organisations that either led by, or serving young people and disabled people.

Women are more likely than men to volunteer, with 46% of women volunteering compared to 42% of men (NCVO 2013), but even with taking this into account men are under-represented in the take up of services.

A reduction in funding for the overall service, and the proposal to reduce funding share to Voice and Influence services could have an impact on the ability of the service to provide support or voice and influence to organisations that are either led by or serving equalities groups. Although consultation with

some equalities led organisations indicated that there is some misunderstanding around which organisation provides infrastructure support for equalities led organisations, for example LGBT Bristol reported they are often asked to support and advise LGB and T organisations and some BME providers would approach BSWN rather than the current provider. Also there are additional equalities led voice and influence organisations which would mitigate this impact.

 Information feedback in the consultation:

During the consultation process there was a particular question focussed on improving access to services for people with protected characteristics. It also builds on the extensive EQIA that was completed in 2010.

Ethnicity

Some of the feedback in the main events questioned whether:
- diverse voices are not heard within the voice and influence services;
- issues for organisations staffed or run by people whose first language is not English and are usually digitally excluded;
- difficulties for smaller organisations (often run by or for equalities groups) due to capacity (time & resources), other modes of communication access to be used e.g. tweeting.

Comments from smaller focus groups said:
- Use of plain English in communications.

There was also feedback that smaller BME organisations felt excluded from receiving support to set up social enterprises.

The main support needs fed back by smaller BME organisations were around fundraising and support.

From the online survey, organisations run for or by BME communities told us:
- There was a need for fundraising support (as do the majority of all VCS organisations who responded);
- That they would prefer to receive support face to face or tailored to their needs (however, they would be prepared to receive online support as there are limited resources and increasing demand for support);
- Through 'voice and influence' work, provision of public services and

provision of support to voluntary organisations were the most important outcomes;

- When asked about whether they would want more resources for 'support' or 'voice' an influence the majority supported more resources be used for support;
- Although the majority of support and voice and influence activities were asked for during the day there was some support for receiving services in the evenings and weekends.

Age: Older people

Feedback from on organisation that was run by and for older people was that there was a need to link similar groups with similar interests together so that they could provide knowledge swaps and mentoring.

From the online survey, organisations run for or by older people told us:
- There was a need for fundraising support (as do the majority of all VCS organisations who responded);
- Through 'voice and influence' work, provision of public services and changes to public services were the most important outcomes;
- When asked about whether they would want more resources for 'support' or 'voice' an influence the majority supported more resources are used for support.

Disability

From the online survey, organisations run for or by disabled people told us:
- There was a need for fundraising support (as do the majority of all VCS organisations who responded);

Religion and belief

From the online survey, organisations run for or by older people told us:
- There was a need for fundraising support (as do the majority of all VCS organisations who responded) and support with management committees and business plans;

Faith based groups felt that the current service is very well set up to provide general support need of most establish organisations but they don't have experience & expertise of working with faith based groups. There are a lot of issues come into play/arise when working from a faith position.

Generally there has been little feedback in the consultation giving information on specific access issues from organisations that support pregnancy and maternity issues, young people, sexual orientation, gender and transgender.

In summary, the reduction in funding could impact on people with protected characteristics in the following way:

BME VCS organisations as there is a need to ensure that:
- BME organisations are fully included in the 'voice and influence' work;
- Provision of face to face services where language is an issue;
- Flexibility around when services are delivered.
- Ensure there are more resources for support services

Age - VCS organisations run by or supporting older people:
- Ensure there are more resources for support services

Religion and belief - Faith organisations:
- Speak to faith based groups to further understanding of providing support and V&I for faith based groups

3.2 Can these impacts be mitigated or justified? If so, how?

Infrastructure support funding has remained at the same level for the last 10 years during a time when the revenue budget for BCC has decreased by approximately 37% and there will be further reductions ahead for local authorities. Until now, a reduction in funding for this type of service has not been undertaken (albeit there has not been a year on year uplift according to inflation during this 10 year period).

Nevertheless, the proposal does suggest the following ways to mitigate against the financial impact:

1. In line with the report by NAVCA on the future of infrastructure support, there needs to be more of an emphasis on leveraging people and resources to contribute to the provision of support to the VCS. This could include partnerships with small businesses, sharing services with other organisations (e.g. IT, HR), exploring fees and charges for some services, and seeking to extend in-kind support with businesses and other organisations.

2. There are opportunities for efficiencies to be made from the current

level of grant funding, for example through a shift to digital services, reduction in venue and catering expenses, reductions in printed matter, etc. However, where language is an issue use of digital services may not be an option.

It is essential that the implementation of any reduction in funding or re-organisation of services does not:

   a. limit access to support services for VCS groups that provide services for communities with protected characteristics
   b. limit access to support services to VCS groups that are user led by communities with protected characteristics.

3.3 Does the proposal create any benefits for people with protected characteristics?
There is clearly a significant take up of VCS Infrastructure support services by VCS organisations run by or for communities with protected characteristics. Unlike other funding streams there has not been a significant reduction in the funding in this area to date and the provision and as the reduction in funding will not happen until 2018-19 giving time to mitigate against the impact.
3.4 Can they be maximised? If so, how?
Consultation feedback indicated the services offered need to be more tailored towards what equalities led VCS organisations need, such services will probably need to be provided separately from the generic offer. Reviewing access to services for protected characteristics will be taken forward by the new service, there is always renewed focus on making a service work more efficiently for all users when a new service is launched.

Step 4: So what?

4.1 How has the equality impact assessment informed or changed the proposal?
This has been addressed in the outcomes and suggested monitoring for the new service under: Theme B: Strengthen the relationships within the sector and across other sectors in Bristol [to further the priorities of the Bristol vision and the Prospectus vision].

4.3 Relevant and pertinent news and info for VCS orgs in Bristol is provided in a |

variety means
And under collaborations:
5.1 Evidence of support to organisations to share information and good practice:
i.   Between organisations of a similar size;
ii.   Between organisations with a similar client group / aim / geography;
iii.   Between organisations with similar backgrounds e.g. BME orgs.
There will also be a recommendation for the new service to undertake a full EQIA to implement finding from this assessment, as well as exploring how else to amend service delivery before and during the proposed reduction in funding.

4.2 What actions have been identified going forward?

1. Undertake additional work to ensure that:
- BME organisations are fully included in the 'voice and influence' work;
- There is provision of face to face services where language is an issue;
- There is flexibility around when services are delivered.
2. Religion and belief - Faith organisations:
- Speak to faith based groups to further understand additional understanding of providing support and V&I for faith based groups
3. Both older peoples and BME VCS organisations advocated more emphasis on support rather than voice and influence. Some work needs to be done to ascertain what types of support are needed and whether there are further access issues to be explored around this.
4. More training needs to be offered to the sector around equalities monitoring as a significant proportion of service users are not responding to monitoring forms or not completing the information, which implies the organisations they represent are unlikely to be undertaking equalities monitoring or reviewing its services effectively.

4.3 How will the impact of your proposal and actions be measured moving forward?

The recommendations of this EQIA will be incorporated into the monitoring for the service and will be reviewed annually to ensure that the VCS Infrastructure services provided are accessible to VCS organisations run by and for protected characteristic groups and to change service delivery in order to achieve this.

Service Director Sign-Off:	Equalities Officer Sign Off:
Di Robinson	Anne James Equality and Community
Service Director Neighbourhoods	Cohesion Team Leader

| Date: 12 /11/2015 | Date: 5/11/2015 |