



Committee Report

PURPOSE: Final Decision Report

KEY OR NON-KEY DECISION: Key decision over £500k spend/save & impacts more than 2 wards

COMMITTEE: Public Health and Communities Committee

DATE: 14 March 2025

TITLE: Bristol Impact Fund 3: One City Many Communities

Ward(s): Citywide

Officer presenting the report: Penny Germon **Job title:** Head of Communities

Committee Chair: Councillor Stephen Williams

Executive Director lead: Hugh Evans: Executive Director for Adult and Communities

Proposal origin: BCC Staff

Purpose of Report:

To seek authority to invite Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations to apply to Bristol Impact Fund 3 (BIF 3) One City Many Communities, which will invest a total of £8.8m grant funding over four years (£2.2m per annum) from 1st April 2026 to the 31st March 2030 to build city resilience by growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequity.

Evidence Base / Options to consider:

1. Community and voluntary organisations are vital to the city wellbeing, health and economy. They support the council to meet its statutory obligations and strategic objectives. Empowered, inclusive and resilient communities are the foundations for a resilient city.
2. In 2016 Bristol City Council pooled grants from across council departments to create a strategic fund focused on addressing inequity and contributing to the City Council's statutory obligations and

strategic priorities. This four-year programme, codesigned with the community and voluntary sector, is designed to give organisations some stability to develop their work, build partnerships and secure additional funding for the long term. All grants end at the end of the programme. There should be no expectation of continued funding.

3. In June 2024, the Public Health and Communities Committee approved an extension of Bristol Impact Fund 2 (BIF 2) medium and large grants to VCSE organisations for 6 months from 1st October 2025 to 31st March 2026 to allow time to work with the new administration on proposals for BIF 3.
4. The overall BIF budget is £8.8m over four years. In February 2022 £2.4m over four years was allocated to the Community Resilience Fund (CRF) with £6.4m allocated to BIF 2. CRF was a one-off fund to support the recovery of the community and voluntary sector in the wake of COVID 19 pandemic. In planning for BIF 3 there have been two consultations (October 2024 and January 2025) about a total proposed saving of 16% giving a four-year budget of £7.4m. On 25th February 2025 full council agreed to reverse the proposed savings reinstating a budget of £2.2m per annum or £8.8m over four years.
5. This proposal commits a further four years of Bristol Impact Fund grant investment in the context of growing inequity and poverty and the negative economic, wellbeing and health impact this has. This is exacerbated by the cost of living, COVID pandemic, climate crisis and reduced public services.
6. Inequity and poverty harms people, fractures communities and undermines cohesion. This investment recognises the importance of community and voluntary organisations in addressing the pressing issues of citizens and communities for example, mental health, economic inclusion, access to jobs, tackling poverty.
7. In 2024, an independent evaluation of the first two years of Bristol Impact Fund 2 shows BIF has been successful in empowering citizens and communities and enabling participation in community and city life. It shows significant impact in producing improved wellbeing. By taking a developmental approach, it is supporting organisations to build resilience and has generated significant added value: £5.2m additional funding was levered into the city by BIF-funded organisations in the first two years, and over 3,100 volunteers were engaged providing over 1 million hours, worth £15.3 million.
8. The proposed approach to BIF 3 been shaped by ongoing engagement and consultation with community and voluntary organisations, internal and external stakeholders including the Bristol Funders Network, learning from COVID-19 and cost-of-living crises, the two previous rounds of BIF, as well as the current policy and strategic context. The proposed approach aligns to the priorities of '*Designing a New Social Reality*' (BSWN) and emerging City Council strategy focusing on prevention and resilience.
9. In response to ongoing crises and challenges we have seen just what is possible when we mobilise community and city assets. Together we have developed a 'One City, Many Communities' approach. Key to this is the importance of long-term investment in creating the conditions and infrastructure for communities to thrive.
10. This grant investment should be seen as one part of a suite of measures alongside changing systems

and structures and reimagining the way the City Council works to grow the power of communities.

11. The overall goal of BIF 3 is to build city resilience by growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequity. To achieve this goal BIF 3 will:
- continue to prioritise communities working in the most deprived parts of the city and communities who face systemic inequity to a) act on priorities most relevant to them b) build resilience c) complement other funding sources d) adapt to changing conditions.
 - continue embedding asset-based community development approaches to empower people, build connection and mobilise resources.
 - support the development of community infrastructure such as community hubs
 - apply seven 'Ways of Working' which aim to embed community building habits and behaviours, to facilitate connections between people, communities and decision makers, while putting an emphasis on equity, giving power and voice to communities who experience the greatest inequity.
 - ring fence advice and support to people experiencing hate crime and discrimination, to include work on prevention and community cohesion.

The proposed approach to the funding is set out in the prospectus in Appendix A.

12. Successful applicants will need to meet baseline standards, complete monitoring and show impact. A budget of up to £264,000 will be set aside for evaluation and create a forum for groups to learn from each other and develop their practice.
13. We have been working as part of the Bristol Funders Network with the aim of sharing information, signposting groups who are not successful in their BIF 3 application.
14. Engagement and consultation (see attached reports) with community and voluntary organisations shows strong support for the proposed approach including: To raise the threshold of the medium & large grants by 10% taking account of inflation
- For small grants to run for two years
 - To retain a ring-fence for hate crime and discrimination work
 - To emphasise the importance of all BIF 3 funded contributing to community cohesion and preventing hate crime
 - To set aside a dedicated budget over 4 years for learning and evaluation
15. As well as the principles and approach the consultation asked for feedback about potential savings. These savings have been reversed by Full Council.
16. Taking account engagement and consultation the following indicative budget headings are proposed:

Medium and large grants	£6,730,000
Small grants	£400,000
Hate crime & discrimination (current budget plus 10% inflation uplift)	£1,406,000
Evaluation and Learning – 3% of the budget	£264,000

17. Medium and large grants will be open to applicants in March 2025 and close June 2025. Support

will be available from Black South West Network and Voscur for organisations wishing to apply. A report will be brought to the C&PH committee in November 2025 (subject to confirmation of the civic calendar for 2025). To protect the revenue position of the council should it be necessary, grant agreements contain a clause to cover for any possible future reductions in funding.

18. The timetable for small grants will be published by September 2025 with the aim of opening round one later in 2025 and round 2 in late 2027.

Officer Recommendations: -

That the Committee for Public Health and Communities

1. Approves the approach to funding for Bristol Impact Fund 3: One City, Many Communities - a total grants fund of £8.8m over four years from 1st April 2026 - 31st March 2030.
2. Authorises the Executive Director for Adults and Communities and the Director for Public Health in consultation with the Chair of The Public Health and Communities Committee to take all steps required to invite VCSE organisations to apply to BIF 3 and to bring a further report relating to the allocation of medium and large grants to the PH&C Committee in November 2025 (TBC).
3. Authorises the Executive Director of Adults and Communities and Director of Public Health in consultation with Chair of the Public Health and Communities Committee to award two rounds of small grants up to £200,000 over four years.
4. Notes the learning from BIF 2 outlined in the [interim evaluation report](#), which has informed the proposed approach to BIF 3.
5. Notes the consultation report at Appendix F.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

1. Emphasis on the importance of early intervention and prevention to address ongoing effects of inequity in our city following COVID-19 and the cost of living crisis and further challenges posed by the climate crisis, public sector financial pressures and increasing demand on services, loneliness and social isolation.
2. Community building activities which enable social connection, self-organisation, access to support and being part of decision-making are a crucial building block for city resilience and our ability as citizens, communities and anchor organisations to meet these challenges.
3. The need to work with citizens and communities to transform services.
4. The need to build resilience in response to ongoing threats.
5. To encourage and nurture active citizenship and democratic engagement.

City Benefits:

1. The goal of BIF 3 is to address inequity and empower communities to foster active citizenship, connection between people and communities and participation in community and city life.

2. This will produce wellbeing, healthier and safer communities and improve local economies.
3. We have seen how vital community and voluntary partners are to weathering of recent crises and challenging events which impacts on all sectors.
4. Evidence shows grant investment in the community and voluntary sector produces significant social value in the way organisations spend money, employ local people, grow community skills and capacity, secure additional funding and mobilise volunteers.

Consultation Details:

1. Early engagement with VCSE sector partners and key stakeholders was carried out between January and September 2024. This included engagement with:
 - Small and large VCSE organisations
 - Organisations led by equalities communities
 - Bristol City Council colleagues in Community Development, Public Health, Adult Social Care, Arts and Culture, Economic Development, Sustainable City and Climate Change, Equality and Inclusion and Children’s Commissioning.
 - Infrastructure organisations Black South West Network (BSWN) and Voscur
 - Members of the Bristol Funders Network
2. An online survey, including an easy read version, was published on the council’s consultation hub between 25th September and 31st October 2024. Respondents could choose to answer some or all of the questions in any order and save and return to the survey later.
A total of 95 people responded to the online survey.
3. Five online public consultation events targeted at community and voluntary organisations were held between 9th and 30th October 2024. Those attending events were from a wide range of organisations working in Bristol, some of which currently receive Bristol Impact Funding and some of which do not.
Black South West Network promoted the online events to their network of Black, Asian and Minoritised Ethnic groups. Voscur promoted it to the members of the LGBTQ+ Partnership. BCC colleagues promoted it to their networks including in the Youth and Play sector, Adult Social Care and Communities.
Two targeted in-person consultation events were held in October 2024, one for Disabled people with learning difficulties and the other for members of the Deaf and hard of hearing community.
A total of 67 people attended the consultation events.
4. A second consultation was carried out in January 2025 about proposed further savings.
5. A full consultation report is attached in appendix F.

Background Documents:

1. [BIF 2 Interim Evaluation Report \(Bristol City Council Website\)](#)
2. [BIF2 Cabinet Paper February 2021 \(Modern Gov website, via Bristol City Council website\)](#)
3. [Black South West Network 2021, Designing a New Social Reality \(BSWN website\)](#)
4. [Director of Public Health Report 2023, The Power of Us](#)

Revenue Cost	£8.8m	Source of Revenue Funding	General Fund £1.6m p.a. Public Health Grant £0.6m p.a.
Capital Cost	£0	Source of Capital Funding	NA
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	If yes - existing or new saving? Choose an item. OR Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Professional comments section:

1. Finance Advice: This report seeks approval to fund grants c£8.8m for the Bristol Impact Fund 3, over four years from 1st April 2026 - 31st March 2030. This will be funded from the general fund c£6.4m and Public Health Grant of c£2.4m (with Public Health Grant spend evenly distributed over the four year funding period and meeting grant conditions as required).

In the event that the Bristol City Council’s funding position changes over the four year period, then resources will need to be flexed to meet the resources available. As set out in the report, BIF 3 grant agreements will contain a clause to cover for any possible reductions in funding.

Finance Business Partner: Denise Hunt, Finance Business Partner 26th February 2025

2. Legal Advice: Provided the proposed arrangements comprise grant agreements (and not contracts for services), the grants will not be subject to the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Client officers should seek legal assistance to ensure this is the case.

The consultation responses at Appendix F must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision. The leading cases on consultation provide that consultation should occur when proposals are at a formative stage, should give sufficient reasons for any proposal to permit intelligent consideration and should allow adequate time for consideration and response. There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses, or a summary of them, before taking its decision.

The Public Sector Equality Duty requires the Committee to consider the need to promote equality for persons, with “protected characteristics” and to have due regard to the need to i) eliminate discrimination, harassment, and victimisation; ii) advance equality of opportunity; and iii) foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not share it. The Equalities Impact Assessment (Appendix B) details the potential adverse impact of these proposals on persons with particular protected characteristics. The decision maker must take into consideration the information in the assessment when reaching its decision.

Legal Team Leader: Husinara Jones, Team Manager/Solicitor 27 February 2025

3. Implications on IT: I can see no implications on IT regarding this activity.

IT Team Leader: Alex Simpson – Lead Enterprise Architect 13th November 2024

4. HR Advice: This report is seeking authority to invite VCSE organisations to apply to Bristol Impact Fund 3, to build city resilience by growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequity. There are no significant HR implications arising from this report.

HR Partner: Debbie Hunt, 03/12/24

APPENDICES

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal

YES

Appendix B – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)	YES
Appendix C – Environmental Impact Assessment	YES
Appendix D – Risk assessment	YES
Appendix E – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix F – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	YES
Appendix G – Options appraisal matrix	NO
Appendix H – Business case / financial analysis	NO