

The future of Neighbourhood Partnerships – local decision making models for discussion

This paper sets out a number of ideas. We would like your feedback and suggestions. These are not fully worked up proposals. We understand there will be lots of questions about how things will work in practice. We are looking to develop these ideas and proposals with you. There will be time to work on the detail. During March we would like to have conversation about the broad ideas.

There will be a formal consultation which will start in May. This initial discussion is about helping us develop proposals which we can then consult on.

We would like feedback about these proposals and options by 7th April at the latest. We will be arranging a meeting with ward councillors to follow up these discussions. Please use this document to respond to each option or state your preferred option.

At the end of this document you will find some 'useful information' links where you will find some background information.

Priorities

- Retain access to some funding, especially in areas of most need
- Enable decisions about the local portion of CIL and other neighbourhood decisions to be made/informed locally
- find a mechanism that does not heavily involve paperwork for making local decisions

Options

A – Community 'Spaces'

There is a clear steer based on feedback from members that retaining something similar to a forum function is a priority. The proposal is to set aside £14k from the £271k remaining in the neighbourhood budget to support this, and for the money to be given to a nominated community organisation in the area so the community space is organised locally. Council colleagues will help where this is needed in the transition period as resources allow. Councillors will decide which community organisation will receive the funding to run the community space. This could be based on agreed criteria.

Option A1: To offer £200/£400/£600 per ward to organise 2 community events / spaces per year. This would be a universal offer across the city for every ward. Total cost £14,000 from the remaining budget. £200 would be offered to one councillor wards, £400 to two councillor wards and £600 to three councillor wards. For example, we know that St George want to keep the same boundaries and create a community partnership, this area would receive £800 to run their community spaces.

Option A2: To offer £1000 per existing NP rather than a set amount per ward. Universal offer across all NPs based on existing boundaries. Total cost £14,000.

B – Local decisions and allocation of funding

The way funding is currently devolved to members required a paperwork-heavy bureaucratic process. The important thing is for members (using feedback from local people) to inform the decisions in public on local relevant things, and for this to be something that a wider range of local people want to be part of.

C – Neighbourhood Funding

C.1 Neighbourhood budget (£271k minus £14k for community space costs and £7k for annual public event costs = £250k)

Option C1.1:

- £1,250 (one councillor ward) /£2,500 (two councillor ward) /£3,750 (three councillor ward) to be available each year to every ward that has access to less than £30k in CIL money via their community space. The money would be given to a local organisation chosen by the ward members and the idea would be that the money is then allocated via arrangements such as community soup* that engage with local people.
- Cost = up to £87.5k
- The remaining money (£169.5k+) to be distributed across the 42 LSOA in 10% most deprived (2015 data) for all areas that have less than £30k in CIL available in their community space area. For example, £4k per LSOA = Approximately £28k in Hartcliffe & Withywood. Cost = £168k.
- Total cost = up to £253k

NB CIL threshold needs to be considered so that it doesn't disadvantage wards that are working together and we don't create more back office administration. At the moment CIL is allocated by NP area – this needs more thought.

Option C 1.2

- Same as above but with amended thresholds / amounts?

S106 and CIL decision making

There is only one option being proposed – this is based on what is possible with future resources and funding. **The proposal for the future is for an annual public event to take place where all of the community spaces can come together over a wider geographical**

area (North, East/Central, South). It would be in this setting that allocation of funding takes place. In order to reduce the need for paperwork, and to allow flexibility, the decisions may not be legally devolved in the same way as they are currently, but any formal sign off would require the allocation decided at this meeting to be honoured unless there were legal implications. Formal sign off might sit with Cabinet Members, the Mayor or a combination of members and officers. This is being explored.

Cost: this will need some officer support (perhaps through democratic services using the time that is spent on current NP meetings?). There may also be venue costs. The proposal is to use the remaining £38k in the NP budget on officer support for these meetings, and allocate up to £7k a year from the £271k Neighbourhood budget for costs associated with these events.

C2: Section 106 budgets

Important context: since the introduction of CIL, the law now says that s106 must be very specific about the mitigation measure and the location, so new s106 agreements do not have much real decision making associated with them.

Option C2.1: No local allocation of remaining s106 budgets - officers / Cabinet leads in consultation with ward members prioritise and deliver works

Option C2.2:

- Allocate remaining flexible s106 budgets at the annual public event (North, East/Central, South). These will tail off towards zero over time due to the newer s106 rules.
- Remove local decision making on s106 budgets that are very specific and therefore don't have any real decision making associated with them (e.g. installing a pedestrian crossing at a set location) – these decisions to go back to officers / Cabinet leads.

Option C.2.3: Allocate/prioritise all local s106 agreements at the annual public events (North, East/Central, South).

C3: CIL budgets

The way that the local component of CIL can be spent has two main constraints. The first is that the CIL must be spent on measures to support the growth of the area, and the second is that the CIL must be spent in accordance with the wishes of the local community (i.e. the community that the development that paid the CIL is located within or near). There are no specific geographical limits to this, but it is clear that CIL cannot be spent in a way that does not relate to the wishes of the community in or near to the development that paid the CIL (for example, it would be difficult to show that money from a development in the city centre could be spent legitimately on the outskirts of the city).

However, there is a case to be made that the money can be invested more widely than the current geographical areas imposed via Neighbourhood Partnerships. For example, if there are fewer libraries or other public facilities in the future, a case could be made for spending CIL money on facilities that are some distance away from the development – further than the existing NP boundaries. The options below try to take this into account.

The method of allocation is not specified here. It could be through direct allocation at meetings, or through an application process (this would need to be done via a third party as there will be little officer resource to manage these process in the future – and may involve a percentage of the money to be paid in a fee).

Areas with Neighbourhood Development Plans (these are formal plans which are part of the Localism Act) receive an additional 10% and would expect the full 25% to benefit the plan area. It is proposed that allocation of the CIL attached to NDPs is made within the community space covering that area.

For example, CIL allocations connected with the Old Market Neighbourhood Development Plan would be made by Councillors in the community space covering Lawrence Hill.

Option C3.1: Allocate CIL spend at the annual public event (North, East/Central, South). 50% of the local element of CIL is to be spent in the community space area (ideally 2 or more wards but this will be locally determined also some areas may decide ward boundaries do not work for them) with 50% to be spent over a wider geographical area on anything that can legitimately be connected to supporting the growth of the wider area and the rules of CIL. Councillors will need to agree area wide priorities for spend.

Option C3.2: Allocate CIL spend at the annual public event (North, East/Central, South) according to member discretion and planning/legal advice. No specific geographic parameters would be set in advance, the responsibility would sit with the councillors to ensure that the CIL spend could be directly be connected to supporting the growth of the area.

Option C3.3: Allocate CIL spend in the same way as current arrangements – i.e. according to existing NP boundaries. The process for this would have to be managed locally as there is no allocated resource for managing this.

Some worked examples based on some of the NPs that have started to decide their future

(Please note the budgets are based on spend commitments as known on 1st Feb)

St George Community Partnership (2 x one councillor wards, 1 x two councillor ward)

- St George are planning to keep the current geographical boundary and form an open community partnership, independent of the council and working collaboratively with councillors and local people.

Budgets available to St George Community Partnership if the suggested options are taken

- £800 for running the community spaces
- £18,000 in CIL to spend in the Community Partnership area
- £5000 neighbourhood budget, allocated via community soup / at community space events / other allocation methods
- Access to additional funding (CIL, s106) and participation in budgeting and decision making at the annual event for East/Central area.

Bishopston, Cotham and Redland Neighbourhood Partnership (3 x two councillor wards)

- BCR are planning to keep the same geographical boundaries and build on the success of some of their recent community events and grant allocation events. Councillors and local residents are currently working together on the plans.

Budgets available to BCR if the suggested options are taken:

- £1,200 for running the community spaces
- £6,000 in CIL to spend in the Neighbourhood Partnership area
- £7,500 neighbourhood budget, allocated via community soup / at community space events / other allocation methods
- Access to additional funding (CIL, s106) and participation in budgeting and decision making at the annual event for North area.

Greater Bedminster Community Partnership (2 x two councillor wards).

- Greater Bedminster have been a strong, independent community partnership for many years who also took on the role of the Neighbourhood Partnership. They will continue to retain the community partnership.

Budgets available to Greater Bedminster Community Partnership if the suggested options are taken

- £800 for running the community spaces
- £55k in CIL to spend in the Community Partnership area
- Access to additional funding (CIL, s106) and participation in budgeting and decision making at the annual event for South area.

You can find further information about Neighbourhood Development Plans, Bristol's approach to CIL and what we know about 'deprivation' in the city by following the links below:

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/neighbourhood-planning--2>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/planning-and-building-regulations/community-infrastructure-levy>

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/statistics-census-information/deprivation>

* **Community Soup** – this is based on the idea of ‘Bristol Soup’, a community-led project which support micro grants. People get together to have a light meal of soup. Everyone pays for the meal. This fund is then available to groups who present their ‘ask’ to the people gathered. The winning idea receives the finding and come back at a later date to share what happened. In Bristol this has led to groups receiving further funding and ‘in kind’ support. Crucially it minimises paperwork and is about local people deciding what’s important.

<https://bristolsoup.wixsite.com/home>