

Appendix A1

Title: Context of the proposal

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Background:

- 1.1 Between 2013 and 2014, Bristol City Council was awarded £5.3m funding to develop a 'research and development test bed' which was a part of the 'Gigabit Bristol Programme' funded by DCMS / BDUK's Super- Connected Cities programme.
- 1.2 Bristol is Open (BiO) was set up to deliver such a test bed as a joint venture between Bristol City Council and the University of Bristol launched in April 2015, which has resulted in a Smart City Research and Development network platform of multiple communications technologies being installed around the city. It can be described as a city-scale research infrastructure for the study of software defined networks, Internet of Things and big data technologies that contribute to smart city solutions.
- 1.3 The BIO infrastructure, which was largely funded through the Super Connected Cities programme, consists of a fibre ring linked to a number of central nodes (located at We The Curious, Watershed, Engine Shed and the University of Bristol) and a wide area wireless mesh network. This infrastructure relies on a network of ducts that Bristol City Council bought from a cable TV company more than a decade ago. Subsequently, the ducts were refurbished and used to network Council buildings and beyond. The duct network was extended to reflect the city's changing business footprint.
- 1.4 The original vision for BiO was the idea of having a properly connected city infrastructure where companies can test applications in a real-world environment – it was unlike anything else that existed in the world at the time.
- 1.5 Cities the world over needed to look toward technology to address the way they manage their resources and infrastructure to deliver innovative services for citizens and businesses.
- 1.6 During its start-up phase, BiO has delivered a number of benefits for Bristol, and for the joint venture owners including:
 - Enhancing the city's profile for being a leader in the smart city sector in the UK and internationally, helping Bristol win a number of awards: TM Forum Global Innovator of the Year; World Communication Awards 'Smart City of the Year'; GLOMO for Smart City, and top spot on Huawei's Smart City Index.
 - Raised the profile of Bristol in collaborative working, and building a network of interlocking organisations.
 - As an asset, it helped organisations leverage grant funding e.g. Replicate and other Horizon 2020 projects and positioned the city for future research bids.
 - As a joint venture, the company has completed many technical trials and experiments that have helped it gain in depth understanding of technology integrations - for the University of Bristol

this has supported their world leading 5G research, and helped to put the University and the City on the world stage.

2. Process undertaken to consider the next steps for the company:

- 2.1 The original intentions of the Research & Development test bed have served both the University and the city well. However, following three years of operation, and in the light of other technology developments such as 5G and a dynamic and evolving market, the joint venture partners reviewed BiO's business model to assist in the planning for where the company should be positioned going forward.
- 2.2 Subsequently, Bristol City Council and the University discussed a number of scenarios for the future of the company and Bristol City Council carried out analysis on three different options, and presented the findings to Shareholder Group on 2 February 2019 (see Exempt Appendix J4). Following this process, and further discussions between Bristol City Council and the University, it was agreed that Bristol City Council and the University should re-position Bristol Is Open in order to best support the roll out of the OPCR (Open Programmable City Region) project as well as other grant funded projects.
- 2.3 Moving forward the University have plans to focus more attention on 5G research and development, which does not have the same requirement for the use of the physical infrastructure which Bristol Is Open has access to.
- 2.4 Bristol Is Open have set out a high level business plan, (Appendix A2 and Exempt Appendix J2) which outlines how they will deliver their project pipeline, whilst supporting Bristol City Council and other city partners to explore options to take the platform forward. These opportunities include further developing its role as a pilot test bed to scale city wide initiatives with an operational and community focus, in line with Bristol's One City Plan.
- 2.5 The aim of smart city research and development, is key to the region's economic growth, and supports the region to develop fit for purpose infrastructure for future needs. Smart City research and development will assist Bristol businesses to succeed and develop world class skills and employment opportunities, and support residents to benefit from a stronger economy and higher quality of life.
- 2.6 The University of Bristol, Bristol City Council and Bristol Is Open are committed to continuing to work together where there are areas of mutual research interest to support the vision for Smart cities.

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