

Decision Pathway – Report Template



PURPOSE: Key decision

MEETING: Cabinet

DATE: 25 February 2021

TITLE	Bristol Impact Fund		
Ward(s)	Citywide		
Author: Penny Germon	Job title: Neighbourhoods & Communities Service Manager		
Cabinet lead: Asher Craig	Executive Director lead: Jacqui Jensen		
Proposal origin: BCC Staff			
Decision maker: Mayor			
Decision forum: Cabinet			
Timescales: Cabinet 25 th Feb			
Purpose of Report:			
To seek delegated authority to invest £8.8m over four years in building city resilience by growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality as follows:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Invite community and voluntary organisations to apply to Bristol Impact Fund - a total grants fund of £6.4m over four years from 1st October 2021 to the 30th September 2025: £1.45m in year 1 and £1.65m over the following four years. 2. Allocate a total of £2.4m over four years to:- <ol style="list-style-type: none"> - Extend BIF funded activity to 30th September 2021 to give more time to the BIF 2 application process. - Support the delivery of a VCSE recovery strategy and enabling a proposed new Communities Resilience Fund commencing 2021/22 			
Evidence Base:			
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In 2016 Bristol Impact Fund set out a new, strategic approach to grant investment focused on tackling inequality. See Appendix A for summary of impact which includes £2.2m additional funding levered into the city and the equivalent of £10.3m in volunteer time. Four years of grant investment agreed by Cabinet in March 2017 ends this year. All medium and large grants are due to end on the 30th June and all small grants finish on 31st December 2021. The contract for the Voice and Influence Partnership ends on 16th May. 2. The BIF prospectus of 2016 anticipated an increasingly difficult financial climate. A 15% taper was built into all funding agreements and encouraged organisations to develop sustainability over the four years of funding. The taper produced a saving of £348k over the four years. £690k p.a. for Community Transport is now managed by the West of England Combined Authority. 3. COVID-19 has had a devastating impact on many organisations. Income streams have dried up and need for support has increased. In August 2020 the city council convened a partnership with VCSE infrastructure organisations, funders, senior representatives from the Clinical Commissioning Group and City Council to understand the impact of the pandemic on the VCSE sector and the opportunity to build back better. Black South West Network (BSWN) led a significant research project on behalf of the whole sector, working with Locality and Voscur to inform this work (report to be published Feb '21). The group has two short term goals: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) Present a strategic plan in response to the research findings b) Work with City Funds to secure resources to facilitate the implementation of the strategy 4. This proposal commits a further four years of grant investment in the context of significant health and economic impacts of Covid 19 and the role of the community and voluntary sector in the transformation of public service delivery. The proposal has been informed by experience and learning from COVID-19, the last four years of Bristol Impact Fund, current policy and strategic context. The approach aims to empower 			

community and voluntary sector organisations deeply rooted in communities to a) take action on priorities most relevant to them b) build resilience c) complement other funding sources d) adapt to changing conditions.

5. In addition to BIF, there is a £4m Community Resilience Fund which forms part of the current capital programme and which will form part of the new Covid Recovery Fund in the proposed budget being brought to Council for approval in February. This fund will be used to deliver priorities such as digital infrastructure and improvements to community facilities. Up to £600k p.a. of revenue is aligned to the Community Resilience Fund to ensure there is the capacity and expertise to deliver community priorities. This was outside the scope of the BIF consultation. The priorities and approach will be developed with the VCSE strategy group and with community and voluntary sectors partners and will be the subject of a future cabinet report.
6. Bristol Impact Fund will align with the priorities of the VCSE research and the emerging strategy focusing on prevention, recovery and resilience whilst addressing the pressing issues of citizens and communities (for example, mental health, economic inclusion, access to jobs, tackling poverty).
7. 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.
8. COVID-19 has shown the vitality of human connection and solidarity. It is social capital that powered the city response to COVID-19. The pandemic has also revealed the deadly consequences of persistent, ingrained inequality and the impact of social exclusion and disconnection.
9. The Director of Public Health Report 19/20 identifies social capital as a key ingredient in building our mental wealth concluding *'we do have social capital in the Bristol savings account, and there are real opportunities to build on this through a forensic focus on connecting people to each other and connecting people to power'*.
10. Through 7 'Ways of Working' BIF aims to embed community building habits and behaviours to facilitate people to people and people to power connections in the process of addressing the priorities of citizens and communities. The city council is also looking to embed these habits and behaviours with other public sector partners.
11. To build back better we need to strengthen the power and voice of the communities that experience the greatest inequity to take their rightful place at the heart of city life.
12. The goal of Bristol Impact Fund 2 is: To build city resilience by growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality. The proposed impacts and funding priorities are described in Appendix A.
13. Following a four week consultation with the VCSE sector the following changes have been made to the proposal (see consultation details below):
 - a) Start the new programme on the 1st October instead of 1st July: extend existing grant recipients by 3 months, which will allow for a 10 week application window and increase the time between decisions and existing grants ending.
 - b) Applicants to have the option of the first 9 months (from 1st October) as a development period to move from crisis to more sustainable ways of working and develop collaborative working arrangements.
 - c) Make clear the importance of support and services by adding a fourth impact - Access trusted, empowering support and services which facilitate people to people connections, inclusion and participation in community life.
 - d) Clarify the relationship between community building and services – BIF 2 is asking all funded organisations (whatever their core business) to embed ways of working which facilitate inclusion, connect people to people and people to power, collaborate with others and to make best use of our collective resources. Where BIF 1 is funding important services for Bristol which for sound reasons are not able to apply the ways of working we are committed to exploring more appropriate funding arrangements.
 - e) Clarify that the Ways of Working set out a direction of travel – it is understood some organisations will be further along this journey than others. BIF applicants must be committed to the process and to learning alongside others.
 - f) Emphasise the importance of inclusion and the role of trusted organisations in facilitating this.
 - g) Priorities: To clarify all successful applicants will need to evidence the impact on citizens and communities in their chosen priority/priorities. BIF is seeking to empower community and voluntary organisations deeply rooted in communities by inviting them to propose the work that is most important.

In addition, BIF will align to the priorities of the VCSE research e.g. (for example, mental health, economic inclusion, access to jobs, tackling poverty). It is also understood that priorities might change and evolve for the community over the four years.

Cabinet Member / Officer Recommendations:

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the Bristol Impact Fund 2: Growing the Power of Communities - a total grants fund of £6.4m over four years from 1st October 2021 to the 30th September 2025.
2. Approves the allocation of up to £600k p.a. (£2.4m over four years) to:
 - i. extend existing medium and large BIF funding agreements by three months from 1st July –30th September 2021
 - ii. extend the Voice & Influence contract by four-and-a-half months from 17th May – 30th September to give more time to the BIF 2 application process.
 - iii. support the delivery of a VCSE recovery strategy to be agreed by March 2021 working with the Voluntary and Community Sector Strategy Group and enabling a new Communities Resilience Fund commencing 2021/22.
3. Authorises the Executive Director for People in consultation with Cabinet Member for Communities (Public Health, Public Transport, Libraries, Parks), Events and Equalities Communities, to invite community and voluntary organisations to apply to Bristol Impact Fund and to award grants necessary for the implementation of Bristol Impact Fund Growing the Power of Communities.
4. Authorises the Executive Director for People to invoke any subsequent extensions or vary /variations specifically defined in the funding agreements being awarded, up to the maximum budget envelope outlined in this report.
5. Notes the Communities Resilience Fund is subject to budget approval in February 2021 and a further cabinet report.

Corporate Strategy alignment:

Bristol Impact Fund will contribute to all four of the Corporate Strategy key commitments by growing the power of communities experiencing systemic inequality:

- Caring and Empowering
- Fair and Inclusive
- Well Connected
- Wellbeing

The strategy recognises the importance of continuing to strengthen the City Councils partnership with communities, community groups and voluntary organisations, particularly those communities facing the greatest inequality, to achieve the city council's key objectives.

City Benefits:

Bristol Impact Fund 2 is focused on growing the power of communities experiencing the greatest inequality – there will be direct benefits to equalities communities over the four years of the fund.

The approach will deliver improved outcomes for citizens in particular health and wellbeing, tackling poverty and financial insecurity, digital exclusion in addition to the priorities identified by communities.

Investing in community and voluntary organisations contributes positively to local economies.

It will deliver significant economic and social value through leveraging in additional funding, freely given time and collaborations.

Consultation Details:

Details of the consultation are in Appendix B.

The findings, response and changes made are detailed in Appendix A - a summary of the key changes is given the

'evidence' section above.

Engagement with Community and Voluntary Organisations

A series of engagement events (5 in total) were held with a range of organisations between 18th September and 1st October 2020. There were different groups invited, with an explicit focus on equalities. Overall 78 people attended the engagement events. The purpose of these events was to seek feedback from a cross section of organisation about the proposed direction of travel and inform the consultation.

Engagement with partners

Presentation to VCSE Strategy Group
Presentation to Bristol Funders Network

Consultation

Took place over 4 weeks ending 16th December including an online survey and series of online meetings. 88 people responded to the online survey, and 93 people attended the consultation events.

Background Documents:

[Investing in Bristol's mental wealth: The theory and practice of Thrive-o-nomics](#)
[About the One City Plan - Bristol One City](#)
[Economic Recovery Plan](#)

Revenue Cost	£8.8m	Source of Revenue Funding	<i>Public Health & General Fund</i>
Capital Cost	£4m	Source of Capital Funding	Capital programme .
One off cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing cost <input type="checkbox"/>	Saving Proposal <input type="checkbox"/>	Income generation proposal <input type="checkbox"/>

Required information to be completed by Financial/Legal/ICT/ HR partners:

Finance Advice:

The proposals for Bristol Impact Fund are within current approved budget levels with no increase or decrease planned as part of the current medium-term financial plan. Committing to a multi-year grant scheme commits the Council to this level of funding till 2025 and therefore reduces the flexibility of the Council overall to respond to risk of reduced funding over the medium term.

The £4m Community Resilience Fund (CRF) forms part of budget proposals to 23 February 2021 Council meeting and is subject to approval. If agreed, a further report will need to be brought back to Cabinet to agree detailed spending proposals for the CRF.

Finance Business Partner: Denise Hunt 11 February 2021

Legal Advice:

Procurement

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

State Aid

The potential level of funding in respect of individual beneficiaries might risk some grants amounting to the provision of state aid. However as the purpose of the grants is only to benefit VCS organisations and their clients local to Bristol, this would strongly suggest that the provision of the grant is unlikely to give rise to state aid/subsidy issues. However legal advice should be sought on this issue particularly given the changes in state aid/subsidy regime post Brexit.

Consultation

The consultation report at Appendix B details the consultation methodology and must be considered to ensure that the consultation occurred when proposals were at a formative stage, gave sufficient reasons for the proposals to permit intelligent consideration and allowed adequate time for consideration and response.

The responses summarised above and included in Appendix B must be conscientiously taken into account in finalising the decision. There must be clear evidence that the decision maker has considered the consultation responses before taking its decision.

The Public Sector Equality Duty

The duty requires Cabinet 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 E) 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 and Sarah Sharland, Team Leader/Solicitor, 10 February 2021

Implications on IT: No anticipated impact to IT Services

IT Team Leader: Simon Oliver 15/12/20

HR Advice: There are no HR implications for Bristol City Council employees as a result of the proposals set out in the report.

HR Partner: Lorna Laing 15/12/20

Procurement Advice:

As noted in the main comments provided by Legal Services provided the funding is awarded as a grant agreement compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 around procurement matters are not necessary. Consideration of applications should be made against a transparent framework for awards, with clear and transparent process followed and necessary due diligence in granting any award to ensure public monies are being suitably appropriated.

Category Manager: Gina Smalley 22/12/20

3. **Reputational narrative:** *Please contact public.relations@bristol.gov.uk for their comments, and copy/paste the email text in this section.*

We would recommend working closely with the communications team to develop positive messages around how this decision will support the city’s needs over the coming years. Proactive communications along with preparing reactive lines may both be necessary on this project. Please work closely with the communications team to prepare these. In particular however, communications about the Bristol Impact Fund may benefit from prepared case studies of the local people and the local organisations that have benefited (case studies in terms of written narrative and imagery) to illustrate clearly the outcomes of the project. Communities will likely welcome the fund which should result in positive public attention, however the council’s reputation will be at risk if it becomes unclear how money has been spent, or if outcomes are not met. Therefore it will be essential that concise narrative and case studies are gathered throughout that clearly portray the objectives of each project, how things are progressing and what outcomes have been achieved.

PR officer: Barry Norris 25/01/21

EDM Sign-off	Jacqui Jensen	06/01/21
Cabinet Member sign-off	Asher Craig	11/02/21
For Key Decisions - Mayor’s Office sign-off	Mayor	27/02/21

Appendix A – Further essential background / detail on the proposal	YES
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Appendix B – Details of consultation carried out - internal and external	YES
Appendix C – Summary of any engagement with scrutiny	NO
Appendix D – Risk assessment	YES
Appendix E – Equalities screening / impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix F – Eco-impact screening/ impact assessment of proposal	YES
Appendix G – Financial Advice	NO
Appendix H – Legal Advice	NO
Appendix I – Exempt Information	NO
Appendix J – HR advice	NO
Appendix K – ICT	NO
Appendix L – Procurement	NO