

Voice and Influence

DRAFT Commissioning Plan

Cabinet Members Foreword

Bristol is a large and diverse city with a reputation for being one of the most vibrant and creative places to live in the UK. In spite of the many accolades we receive, our city faces many challenges and for some of our citizens the problems they face are all too real. Some of our communities suffer greater levels of poverty and disadvantage; and they still face barriers that prevent them from fulfilling their potential and participating in the life of the City. We must be honest about the inequality we still have in our City, and ensure that the proceeds of Bristol's growth are spread fairly amongst our communities.

The diversity between and within equalities groups is substantial. For example there are many citizens from within BME communities, who identify as LGBT or who have disabilities, who feel themselves marginalized or excluded. This may be exacerbated by socio-economic forces or by the way the city council operates.

We want Bristol to be a city in which every citizen feels valued and has the chance to have their voice heard. By connecting people and organisations from within and across communities we hope to recognise the knowledge and experience citizens bring, find solutions which empower local people, and extend best practice across the city.

We believe that an effective Voice and Influence service will underpin our efforts to create a fairer city for all. We hope that it will allow citizens who suffer disadvantage or discrimination to raise issues and see positive outcomes. We also hope that this service will allow new work to develop and create new partnerships.

For those reasons we propose to use a procurement model to secure the best possible approach. This consultation is your chance to let us know what you think of that model. It is likely to have a significant impact on the way we fund organisations across the city and on the outcomes we seek. We look forward to receiving your comments and working with you in the months to come.

Cllr Asher Craig, Deputy Mayor for Communities

Cllr Estella Tincknell, Cabinet Member for Culture, Events and Equalities

1 Introduction

- 1.1. Bristol City Council intends to contract with an organisation to provide voice and influence services for people in Bristol who experience inequality and disadvantage. The aim of the contract will be to enable people to have a voice and to use their voice to influence the things that matter to them as individuals, at neighbourhood level and at city level through participation and representation. We are interested to hear from an organisation or a collection of organisations working together that can take on this challenge.
- 1.2. Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents, and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, what or whom they were born, what they believe, or whether they have a disability. Equality recognises that, historically, certain groups of people with particular characteristics e.g. race, disability, gender and sexual orientation have experienced discrimination¹.
- 1.3. By disadvantaged people we mean those people and communities who lack or are denied resources, rights, goods and services, and who cannot be part of the usual connections, activities and opportunities, available to the majority of people in Bristol. This is also known as social exclusion².
- 1.4. We want to invest the limited funding we have in a way which generates the best possible impacts for our communities who are living with or at risk of disadvantage and inequality. This draft plan sets out our proposal for how we intend to contract with an organisation or collection of organisations that will provide this. The procurement model is closely aligned with the Bristol Impact Fund model as set out in the VCS Grants prospectus³ and we use much of the same wording and concepts throughout the document. We would encourage bidders to read the VCS prospectus for further information as it is not fully replicated here and gives context and relevant background data.
- 1.5. The Bristol Impact Fund (BIF) model was co-produced during 2015 in a series of ten three hour meetings held over a period of several months with representatives from the voluntary and community sector (VCS). The outcome of the extensive Co-production process is the definition of the ways of working, a set of key challenges and 3 areas where we want to see impact. The relevant parts of this model have been adopted to meet the objectives of the voice and influence funding and they are outlined below. The parts of the BIF prospectus that have been reproduced in full in this document have been italicised.

¹ Equality and Human Rights Commission

² This is based on a definition taken from: Levitas, R., Pantazis, C., Fahmy, E., Gordon, D., Lloyd, E. and Patsios, D. (2007) *The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion*. Department of Sociology and School for Social Policy, Townsend Centre for the International Study of Poverty and Bristol Institute for Public Affairs, University of Bristol

³ <https://www.bristol.gov.uk/people-communities/grants-for-voluntary-and-community-organisations>

- 1.6. Throughout May 2017 Bristol City Council worked with a stakeholder group of VCS representatives⁴ to further strengthen the co-production foundation to the BIF work and to develop it further in this context of voice and influence. The group took a closer look at what the city needs and what the new fund for voice and influence should deliver. The key messages from this group have been added to the Bristol Impact Fund model to provide guidance about what the Council wants to achieve with this contract.
- 1.7. The current delivery of voice and influence in Bristol is through six equality forums. The current funding arrangements of five⁵ of these forum organisations will end and the newly commissioned contract will begin in early 2018. Bristol Women's Voice will continue under the Bristol Impact Fund funding already allocated. The Council expects that the new organisation will work with and complement the work of Bristol Women's Voice.
- 1.8. We have decided that the new service will be put in place with a contract after considering the specifics of the type of service needed. The council is however keen to ensure the commissioning process is open to a wide range of organisations including small organisations. We also want to support a vibrant voluntary and community sector. We will do this by ensuring the process is simple and we will reduce barriers for small organisations. This means, for example, making sure financial checks are proportionate.
- 1.9. We cannot ring fence the process for the Bristol VCS due to the EU procurement rules so it be available to the open market. We will however be accessing Bristol specific knowledge and insight to ensure successful provider is able to meet the needs of Bristol's citizens. We will also ask a question about social value and put a strong weighting on this question.
- 1.10. To summarise, we are building on the Bristol Impact Fund Model and further informing this model by the specific voice and influence learning emanating from a recent VCS stakeholder consultation group. We have produced a needs assessment that looks at the way citizens of Bristol participate in public life. Following a 8 week consultation period on the new model we will organise a market development day and then set up a competitive tender process. We anticipate that the new service will be in place by early 2018.

2 The Bristol Impact Fund Model

- 2.1 The VCS prospectus makes the following comments about Bristol –
Bristol faces a number of significant challenges. The city's prosperity is not shared by all its citizens: many people face multiple disadvantages. Within the city some of the most prosperous areas in the UK sit side by side with some of the most deprived and the gaps are increasing. The Bristol

⁴ See appendix 1

⁵ Bristol Disability and Equality Forum, Bristol Older Peoples Forum, The Multi Faith Forum, BME Voice, LGBT Bristol.

neighbourhoods which suffer from high levels of deprivation are the same now as they were in 1999 and the deprivation is persistent.

2.2 *However deprivation and disadvantage are not just spatial issues concentrated in particular areas of the city. Some people such as Black and minority ethnic (BME) people, Disabled people, women, lesbian, gay and bisexual people, transgender people, young people and older people are more likely to face disadvantage.*

2.3 *Within these groups there are people who face multiple disadvantage as a result of the systems (e.g. financial, social, educational, and class systems), as a result of historic, economic and geographic factors in our city and as a result of discrimination. An example of this is provided by the recent research⁶ published by the Runnymede Trust, which has shown that Bristol has the 7th worst level of inequality between Black and minority ethnic BME people and white British people. The research shows that between 2001 and 2011, Bristol has deteriorated as a place to live for BME people and is stark evidence that inequality for BME people has increased in our city.*

2.4 *By communities we mean people who live in the same place and have a particular characteristic in common*

2.5 *We want to be sure that our investment of public funding into the Voluntary Community Sector has the most positive impact for the citizens of the city.*

2.6 *From the Bristol Impact Fund model we will build on the co-production approach and adopt the following challenges, ways of working and one of the key impacts -*

Two key challenges

- ❖ *Enabling influence and participation in the community.*
- ❖ *Improving access to information, services and opportunities in the city and increasing digital inclusion.*

Enabling influence and participation in the community

National research⁷ that included a study in South Bristol showed that feeling part of something matters – and so does having a voice. People need to have someone/thing local that they can go to for advice and information. It concluded that everything is linked – neighbourhood satisfaction, health satisfaction, and social support. There seems to be a link between people’s satisfaction with their neighbourhood and their satisfaction with other areas of their lives, such as their health. Through the Bristol Impact Fund we want to

⁶ Runnymede Trust - Ethnic Inequalities in Bristol, Manchester and Barking and Dagenham 2017

⁷ Levitas, R., Pantazis, C., Fahmy, E., Gordon, D., Lloyd, E. and Patsios, D. (2007) The Multi-Dimensional Analysis of Social Exclusion. Department of Sociology and School for Social Policy, Townsend Centre for the International Study of Poverty and Bristol Institute for Public Affairs, University of Bristol

support holistic approaches to wellbeing, community engagement and social life.

We want the newly commissioned service to enable people to use their voices to influence the things that matter to them in their community, at neighbourhood level, city level through participation and representation and we are interested to hear from organisations that can work to support this.

Increasing access to information, services and opportunities in the city and increasing digital inclusion.

Bristol can be a vibrant city to live in. It is building a reputation of activism and creativity. It has a rich and diverse cultural landscape of theatre, live art, festivals, museums, sport events and facilities. However participation levels in Bristol's services and opportunities vary widely across communities.

People can be excluded from services and opportunities in many ways and for many reasons. For example impairment-related exclusion affects Disabled people who are unable to use services because of issues such as poor physical access, no provision of hearing loops or BSL interpreters or because of lack of thought and planning about accessible information and support. Digital exclusion is a growing problem for some people as more and more services and interactions are online. The people who are most likely to be digitally excluded are the people who are most likely to face disadvantage and this compounds their problems.

We want this voice and influence funding to improve disadvantaged people's access to information, services and opportunities so that they can understand their rights, stand against discrimination and inequality, and know what is available to them.

We want this voice and influence funding to improve disadvantaged communities ability to influence how services in the city are delivered and accessed so they are able to enjoy what the city has to offer

Three ways of working

- ❖ *Building on the strengths of people and communities.*
- ❖ *Connecting people and organisations within and across communities.*
- ❖ *Helping people to help themselves and each other.*

Building on the strengths of people and communities -

We want to build on the strengths of people and communities in the city and to support projects to provide the material and emotional framework for individuals and groups to feel fully part of our communities. Building on strengths or using 'asset based' approaches provides a different way of thinking about the role of individuals, communities and organisations in creating vibrant, prosperous and inclusive communities. It is about creating the right conditions where communities can do things for themselves, where

people can get help when they need it and where they need help to live their lives from outside agencies, they are empowered to shape and influence how that works.

We want to use this approach so we can make better use of the resources we have, or that we have access to, so that we can support each other to use them.

Connecting people and organisations within and across communities -

We want the voice and influence provider to tell us how they will work together through networking and through strategic alliances (or relationships) to improve the lives of citizens. We are also interested to hear from organisations that want to work together to improve outcomes, to improve pathways or routes for service users and to reduce costs.

Connections and networks are important things for people as well as organisations. We want organisations to tell us how their work will help to connect people and communities so that they have better understanding and awareness of each other and can share and grow ideas.

Helping people to help themselves and each other

We want to take a preventative approach to support disadvantaged people, (those who are unable to withstand the effects of pressures and stresses) and those who are at risk of disadvantage (people who are likely to reach a point where they can no longer withstand those pressures and stresses). Our aim is to build resilience for individuals, families, neighbourhoods and communities of interest. By this we mean that we want people to be helped or empowered to build their skills, confidence, networks and optimism so that they are more able to manage the pressures, changes and stresses and weather difficult times together.

The impact

❖ *Reduced disadvantage & inequality*

2.7 We have set out what we mean by disadvantage and inequality in the introduction. For the voice and influence commissioning we will adopt the same discipline of asking bidders to identify the problem for Bristol in terms of using voice and influence to tackle disadvantage and inequality and to support this with quantitative and qualitative data. We will ask how this problem can be solved and how change can be measured. These measures will be built into the contract alongside the specifics outlined in this document and contract specification.

3 The Stakeholder group recommendations

3.1 Key messages arising from the VCS stakeholder group concern the type, remit and sustainability of the new organisation. The key recommendations are below and these will form part of the contract specification:

- one contract compared to a number of smaller contracts
- that the remit includes those who have protected characteristics and those who experience socio economic disadvantage
- that the expected focus of the work is wider than the council and includes working with other key organisations and the business community to create a city approach.
- that community services need to work towards being more financially independent due to the effect of shrinking budgets.

3.2 **One contract funded project** – The VCS stakeholder group recommended that the one contract is beneficial and can deliver the impacts expected from this funding. The reasons given are that –

- ❖ Intersectionality (how an individual can face multiple threats of discrimination when a number of protected characteristics overlap, such as gender, ethnicity, sexual orientation etc.) is a key reason for having one service. Rarely is someone just affected by one form of discrimination so it was felt that an approach which examines the overlap between different forms of discrimination would be more effective.
- ❖ The fund will be more effective and efficient if utilised by one organisation or a collection of organisations working together. Bristol needs a new dynamic and ground breaking service that leads the way in improving voice and influence for a wider group of people and with a wider remit and therefore the pooled resource would be needed to deliver this. We are looking for a solution that uses new and tested ideas about how an organisation can lead the way in providing voice and influence for equalities and disadvantaged groups and people. It was recognised by the stakeholder group that equality groups led by people who are from that equality group bring tremendous knowledge, passion and experience to the work of individual equality services. We believe however, that a single service can make the most of the funds available, avoid duplication and employ or work with those with knowledge, expertise and passion for tackling inequality and disadvantage.
- ❖ There is common ground in the work of the equalities forums and community groups. This is evidenced in the manifestos of the equality forums. The common themes are a call for change in –
 - Political and executive representation
 - Housing
 - Health
 - Community safety
 - Education

One service could address these issues for a number groups of people with protected characteristics and who experience disadvantage.

- ❖ Collective strength will be gained from having one contract to represent all. The group recognised that whilst some people with protected characteristics are moving towards or are in positions of power and influence, for example, women are increasingly taking up more senior and diverse roles, other groups struggle. It was stated that for LGBT+ people being 'out' in society is still problematic due to discrimination and that disabled people may be excluded from accessing employment. Having one organisation will allow for powerful allies to be found who can speak for all those who experience inequality and disadvantage.

- 3.3 **The inclusion of tackling socio economic disadvantage with this funding** - The VCS stakeholder group were strongly in favour of this. The group recognised that people who experience socio economic disadvantage also need to be included within the remit of this voice and influence project. The quality of life survey illustrates that there are many areas of Bristol predominantly on the edge of the city that feel that they do not have influence over decisions that affect them about the local area or the public services they use. This means the remit of this service is wider than equalities groups. The group also recognised that people with protected characteristics are overrepresented in those who experience socio economic disadvantage.
- 3.4 **City vision** - The remit of the contract will include looking beyond the work and funding of Bristol City Council. We want the new contract to include work that develops partnerships with other key organisations in the city such as the universities and the business communities. Ideas from the stakeholder group include using the private sector to support -
- volunteer programmes
 - mentoring for staff and volunteers
 - access to resources such as meeting spaces
 - publicity and connections
- 3.5 **Funding** –The stakeholder group felt that funding whether through grants or contracts is essential for community organisations however for many being self-funding would need to be a long term goal. It was recognised that volunteer programmes cost money especially for an organisation striving to be inclusive and having accessible venues, projects, events and opportunities. Also that due to the reduction in funding generally many organisations are searching for volunteers and funding. There was a concern about organisations having to rely heavily on volunteers, and that generating volunteers cannot just be done virtually nor can supporting them.
- 3.6 The contract will reflect the Bristol Impact Fund model in that there is a taper applied. This is because, although the council wants to support a

thriving VCS, there are savings that have to be made. The new fund needs to act as a springboard for the provision of voice and influence that will work towards being more financially independent. This could include both fund raising and developing a business model. Identifying future funding options will be part of the contract specification as will a business plan.

4 The Needs Assessment

4.1 We have conducted a needs assessment to plot the various ways we know people participate in public life including voting patterns, the use of social media, partnership work and participation in consultations run by the city council.

4.2 The document gives an overview on the subject of voice and influence in Bristol. It does not claim to be comprehensive; however, the patterns in the data are clear. The picture clearly illustrates that there is a large opportunity to increase the voice and influence of the citizens of Bristol, particularly amongst certain groups and geographic communities. The voting pattern reflects to a degree other data sets such as social and economic deprivation in the city, for example areas of deprivation within Bristol produced the highest vote to leave the EU possibly as a way of expressing dissatisfaction with the current systems. In addition, consultations run by the City Council do not always reach a wide audience or attract a large number of responses.

4.3 It concludes by saying that more needs to be done to allow residents to be influential in decisions both in organising the consultation in a truly meaningful way, but also allowing space for involvement where residents can influence the decision making process. We want the newly commissioned service to enable people to use their voices to influence the things that matter to them in their community, at neighbourhood level, city level through participation and representation and this needs assessment has shown there to be a need for the service.

5 Consultation period

5.1 The consultation period for this draft commissioning plan will be eight weeks which is shorter than the advised twelve week period set out in the Bristol Compact. This is due to the fact that the BIF fund has already been through a process of consultation and co-production with VCS representatives. We are consulting on the key issues that affect voice and influence and propose that 8 weeks, with advance notice, is sufficient. The ways of working, key challenges and impact are already determined. We also believe that, in this financial climate, it is in the interests of people and communities to get this service in place as quickly as possible.

5.2 We have added to the co-production by convening the VCS stakeholder group and this has produced guidance on the expanded remit of the new look

for the voice and influence work that will be reflected in the contract specification.

5.3 During the consultation period of eight weeks we will use BCC citizen space and consultation finder, offer to visit groups in the daytime or evening to explain the draft plan, have an event in city hall, run a survey and publicise the consultation as widely as possible using the council's social media and community groups connections. We will also advertise it on Voscur's website.

6 The number of contracts.

6.1 Following the outcome of the stakeholder group and building on the BIF principles of organisations working together we intend to offer one contract that will be used to bring voice and influence to those who experience inequality and disadvantage. A question about this approach is included in the consultation survey.

7 Procurement method

7.1 The council will conduct an open tender process to appoint one provider or consortia to deliver the contract. As the estimated contract value falls below the Light Touch Regime threshold the rules of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 are not applicable thus we are not required to advertise opportunity in the Official Journal of the European Union (OJEU) which advertises the opportunity across the EU.

7.2 The tender process will assess a bidder's ability to deliver the contract and questions will be proportionate to the contract value. The opportunity will be advertised on the Councils e-tendering system ProContract. In order to view and complete tender submission all bidders first need to register on the portal:- <https://procontract.due-north.com>

Following consultation a pre-tender event will be held for perspective bidders to provide further detail on the contract and the bidding process.

8 Data sources

8.1 We have listed three key information sources below to help organisations find local data.

- Bristol City Council (2016-17), [Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Data Profile](#)
- Bristol City Council, [Statistics and census information](#)
- Bristol City Council (2016) [Quality of Life In Bristol](#)

9 Market engagement day

9.1 In order to encourage and support collaboration we will hold a market engagement day. This will be during the consultation period to give as much time as possible for potential bidders to organise collaborations. This day will include information about methods of collaboration to deliver contracts. The session will include an opportunity to describe your organisations ethos and experience and to meet with other organisations who are interested in collaboration.

10 Funding

10.1 The funds for this work are for three years. The fund for the first year will be £140,000. There will be a taper in years 2 and 3 of 5% and 10% of the whole contract value. The taper reflects the current financial climate and the need to reduce spending. It will be necessary to demonstrate the move to financial independence in the application process.

Year One	£140,000
Year Two	£133,000
Year Three	£119,000
Total	£392'000

10.2 The Bristol Compact is the agreement made between the public sector and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) in the city. The Compact recognises that positive working relationships are crucial to the city of Bristol and it seeks to define and strengthen the links between the public sector and the VCS – for the benefit of Bristol, its people and communities. We have tried to make sure that our approach to the voice and influence funding comply with the Bristol Compact.

11 Indicative procurement timetable

	Start Date	Finish Date
8 week public consultation period	July 31st	24 th September
Market Engagement Day	TBC (Week beginning 11 th September)	
Publish final procurement plan and equalities impact assessment	10 th October	
Bidders day	TBC (week beginning 16 th October)	
Tender – 6 weeks	23rd October	3 rd December
Evaluation	4 th December	17 th December
Current grants end so a further extension will be needed	31 st Dec	2 nd April
Award	18 th December	
Standstill period	19th December	

Notice to current providers no later than this date but earlier if possible as this will be of benefit to current providers.	2 nd January	
Implementation period	2 nd January	2 nd April 2018
New service begins		3rd April 2018

12 Consultation survey

bristol.gov.uk/voiceandinfluence

13 Contact details

Email to equalities team at – equalities.team@bristol.gov.uk

Appendix 1

The VCS Stakeholder Group

Name	Organisation	Signature
Abdul Ahmed	Bristol Somali Forum	
Claire Hayward	Freeways	
Meri Rizk	The Hive	
Henry Poulton	Off The Record	
Babs Williams	Phoenix Social Enterprise	
Amy Kinnear	Hartcliffe and Withywood Partnership	
Tasleem Kaurser	Bristol University	
Saira Anwar	Avon and Bristol Law Centre	
Karen Brown	Christchurch Hengrove	
Adam Rees	Bristol Aging Better	
Councillor Ruth Pickersgill	BCC	
Jane Emanuel		
Kate Duggan	St Monica Trust	
Thomas Renhard	Bristol Independent Mental Health Network (BIMHN)	