

Democratic Services
Room 211
The Council House
College Green
Bristol
BS1 5TR

24 January 2012

Community Investment Grant – Statement to Cabinet

Voscur welcomes Bristol City Council's continued commitment to invest in voluntary and community sector organisations despite the current financial constraints facing local authorities. A strong and vibrant voluntary and community sector is essential if many of the national and local policy agendas (for example Localism, Community Right to Challenge, personalisation in health and social care, and neighbourhood planning) are to be effectively implemented. Although the £750,000 available in the Community Investment Fund is welcome, when put in the context of the Council's annual budget for 2012/13 it remains a relatively small sum.

It is Voscur's role to strengthen and maintain a vibrant and diverse sector which reflects the different communities in Bristol and it is in this spirit that we are writing to you. Voscur is concerned that of the ten organisations that have not been successful in applying for a grant within the stronger communities theme, eight are led by, or delivering services to, equalities and or disadvantaged communities. This reduction in funding may impact disproportionately on some of the communities most in need, especially at a time when other funding sources are also reducing.

Eric Pickles, the Minister for Communities and Local Government has issued guidance to local authorities that 'disproportionate' cuts in funding should not be imposed on voluntary and community organisations. Voscur is concerned that Bristol City Council has not considered the cumulative impact of reduced funding for voluntary and community sector organisations from Bristol City Council and other public sector bodies. The recommendations in the cabinet report appear to contravene the guidance in the Community Investment Fund Briefing Note from August 2011, and do not set out how Bristol City Council has considered the impact of reductions in other sources of funding for the organisations listed in the report as part of reaching these recommendations. Before the recommendations are approved, and in the interests of transparency, we would seek further clarification as to how these decisions were made and whether the cumulative impact of reductions in funding have been considered.

Max Beseke
Chair, Voscur