



## Environmental and Neighbourhood Improvement Policy

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## Contents

1. Policy Statement.....	2
2. Aims and objectives.....	2
3. Roles and Responsibilities and Authority.....	2
4. Scope.....	3
5. The Policy.....	3
Funding channels.....	3
Scheme promotion .....	3
Improvement types.....	4
Accountability to residents on performance and sharing of good ideas. ....	4
Application and Approval process .....	5
<b>End of year review with residents to measure impact.....</b>	<b>5</b>
Appendices .....	5
Appendix A – Legal and Policy Context .....	6
External .....	6
Appendix B – Glossary of terms .....	6
Appendix C – Associated Documents .....	6
Internal.....	6

## **1. Policy Statement**

Bristol City Council (BCC) strategic themes and priorities for Homes & Communities include healthy resilient and inclusive neighbourhoods. In support of this theme, this policy outlines the objectives, strategies, and actions that will be pursued to achieve environmental and neighbourhood improvements for BCC tenants and Leaseholders.

This policy has been put in place to support:

- easily accessible routes for BCC residents who are tenants and leaseholders, to apply for funding for projects that improve the look and feel of where they live (see section 5 below).
- Improved accountability to residents through regular reporting of successful projects
- We will work in partnership with residents and relevant local partnerships towards the achievement of mutual objectives.

This policy has been developed with feedback from residents during tenant scrutiny panel.

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and agreed by the Equalities Team.

## **2. Aims and objectives.**

The policy aims to:

- Encourage residents' ideas for projects across the city.
- Effective scheme promotion and publicity with an easy application process
- Clear decision-making process that keeps residents informed and supports project delivery.
- Accountability to residents, regular reporting on budget spends, successful projects and the difference they have made for residents, sharing of good ideas across the city.
- Using the budget to support a range of neighbourhood, environmental and resident initiatives to improve look and feel of where residents live.

## **3. Roles and Responsibilities and Authority**

The Director of Housing is responsible for the overall delivery of the service. Tenancy Management are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

Planned Improvements Service and Tenancy Management have a shared responsibility for activities relating to this policy. Various staff responsible for activities relating to managing tenancies that have responsibility for delivering this policy are officers across Housing and Landlord Services.

All staff involved in environmental and neighbourhood improvement activities have specific roles and actions set out in the procedures that support this policy.

## 4. Scope

Funding is from the Housing Revenue Account (rent and service charge collection) which must be used for the management and maintenance of council owned housing.

Projects should benefit council homes and communal areas covered by the Housing Revenue Account. Sometimes there will be indirect benefits for the surrounding area.

## 5. The Policy

This policy will serve as a guiding framework to drive environmental and neighbourhood improvement initiatives across communities within the city. Regular reviews and updates will be conducted to ensure its alignment with future emerging environmental issues, essential health and safety work, and community needs and aspirations. There will be an equal focus of attention to highly populated areas across the whole city.

### Funding channels

Improving the security and appearance of homes and estates is a priority identified by residents. This has influenced the allocation of funding in the Housing Investment Plan (HIP) for environmental improvements and neighbourhood investments for minor and major improvements to the look and feel of neighbourhoods and estates.

Funding from the Housing Revenue Account will be divided to fund 3 streams. To support the delivery of more projects across the city with fewer delays. These are:

- 1) **Neighbourhood Improvement Bids** – for larger projects costing over £15K.
- 2) **Environmental Improvement Bids** – for smaller, easier to deliver projects costing up to £15k each.
- 3) **Connecting communities**– annual £300 per Housing Officer, budget for low-cost community initiatives that create opportunities for residents to come together.

### Scheme promotion

The policy will aim to deliver effective scheme promotion and publicity with an easy application process for residents and leaseholders.

Bristol City Council will promote improved awareness of the funding available to tenants and leaseholders using a communication plan developed in conjunction with Resident Engagement team and Estate Management. The communication plan will reflect resident feedback in the development of this policy including:

- Local promotion, pop-up events
- Range of channels including, posters for noticeboards, newsletters, tenant forums, advertising campaigns, improvements to web page
- Housing Officers will actively promote the scheme to residents as part of estate and neighbourhood standard inspections.

There will be a straightforward application process with available application support from the housing officer who will also organise consultations. The process associated with this will be outlined within the standard operating procedure.

## **Improvement types**

Housing and Landlord Services will respond to improvement requests from tenants (and leaseholder) at a local level that will either address a specific issue or improves the local neighbourhood. For example project ideas that increase choices for residents across all council homes particularly where there is a high concentration of council properties (not exclusively sites with communal areas).

The type and range of projects that may be considered for funding through the EIB or NIB are:

- Works that could reduce crime, vandalism, anti-social behaviour.
- Landscaping, planting work.
- Improved lighting.
- Communal fencing.
- Improved or new signage.
- Benches and seated areas.
- Work which could complement other improvements.

This list is not exhaustive and other projects may be considered for funding.

## **Accountability to residents on performance and sharing of good ideas.**

The Policy delivers accountability to residents, with regular quarterly reporting on budget spends, successful projects and the difference they have made for residents as well as sharing of good ideas across the city (e.g. key performance indicators). Steps to ensure this occurs will be outlined with the standard operating procedure.

The policy will give tenants an opportunity to scrutinise city wide spending on agreed schemes with regular quarterly reporting by Tenancy Management on:

- each of the 3 budget schemes to resident forums and Councillors
- communication plan developed in conjunction with Tenancy Management and Tenancy Engagement Team to include: BCC website, housing newsletters and/or social media and leaflets/posters.

The Policy aims to use the budget to support a range of neighbourhood, environmental and resident initiatives to improve look and feel of where residents live:

- The BCC web site will act as a platform for sharing good ideas across the city by reporting on the spending and sharing successful projects, with feedback from residents on the difference they have made to where they live. For example, an annual update of how the money has been spent with case studies on where the scheme has made a difference to the community.
- Monitoring by Tenancy Services will identify the location and spread of projects across the city and inform Housing Officers/Tenancy Engagement Team of areas for targeted promotion.
- Reporting will include unsuccessful bids and why they were turned down.
- The identified key performance indicators will be linked to the tenants' satisfaction feedback on communal areas and Landlord making a positive contribution to your

neighbourhood. This feedback will be important in helping BCC to assess the performance objectively and identify where we can improve.

## **Application and Approval process**

Clear decision-making process that keeps residents informed and supports project delivery.

Applications for improvement request can be submitted throughout the year by online or paper application form. Applicants will receive confirmation that the application has been received and a detailed timeframe to expect a decision. Applications will be subject to a tenant consultation process prior to submitting for approval. The process associated with this will be outlined within the standard operating procedure.

### **Approval Process**

- 1) **The Neighbourhood Improvement Fund bid: annual budget £515,000 (smaller number of larger individual projects)**
  - a) Service Managers responsible for Tenancy Management will receive bids and forward supported bids to Special Projects Surveyor for initial costings and feasibility check.
  - b) Bid returned to Service Managers, Tenancy Management for decision to proceed if prior resident consultation or for resident consultation prior to decision. Track progress system for submitting resident(s) including reasons for refusal if this applies.
- 2) **Environmental Improvement Bids Panel: annual budget £137,500 (individual applications each costing up to £15k)**
  - (a) Service Managers responsible for Tenancy Management will receive bids fortnightly and forward supported bids to Special Projects Surveyor for initial costings and feasibility check.
  - (b) Bid returned to Service Managers, Tenancy Management for decision to proceed if prior resident consultation or for resident consultation prior to decision. Track progress system for submitting resident(s) including reasons for refusal if this applies.
- 3) **Connecting Communities (£300 per Housing Officer, per year)**
  - (a) Housing Officers working with residents will be responsible for their own approvals for low-cost resident initiatives. This will be monitored via a shared space online between the Service Managers and Tenancy Management Team Managers allowing for the details to be transferred and incorporated in the review process below.

### **End of year review with residents to measure impact.**

The regular/quarterly update will feed into an annual end of year review. The annual review will be presented by Services Managers to tenant forums with the support of the Resident Engagement Team, in order to improve the future success of the scheme and identify opportunities for increased resident involvement.

## **Appendices**

## **Appendix A – Legal and Policy Context**

### **External**

- Equalities Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Welfare Reform Act 2012
- Housing Act 1996 (IT's)

## **Appendix B – Glossary of terms**

Environmental Improvement Budget (EIB)	Refers to the monthly budget that is allocated for environmental improvement works
Neighbourhood Improvement Budget (NIB)	Refers to the annual budget of works that are allocated for the cost of the works required to the tendering process and mobilizing/distribution of contractors.
Connecting Communities	A nominal pre approved small annual spend to be used by Housing Officers/Sheltered Housing Officers who are working with residents.

## **Appendix C – Associated Documents**

### **Internal**

All associated documents such as: application forms; scoring guides; and rules for spend linked to this policy will be available within the standard operating procedure.