



Economic Strategy

2025–2035

**Bristol's Economy of Tomorrow:
Our Delivery Themes and Priorities**

Promote Local Wealth Building



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We will work with employers to create accessible, well-paying jobs for residents and to leverage assets to benefit local people. Empowering residents to actively participate in participatory models and the development of green and community infrastructure will not only support a just transition, but also improve fairness, opportunity, and prosperity.

Our approach to local wealth building will be key to delivering a fairer Bristol, ensuring that our communities have greater ownership of, and agency within, our economy. There is a clear role for employers in generating local wealth through the provision of ‘good work’, but there is also a role for anchor organisations in the city who have significant spending power and can ensure that they are driving social impact through local procurement practices. Alternative business and funding models, including mutuals and cooperatives, will play an important role in not only driving growth in our local economy, but also in ensuring that the wealth generated here is regenerative and continues circulating within our communities and city, rather than flowing out.

‘Good Work’ – employment which is secure, fairly paid, offers flexible working patterns and development opportunities and operates fair recruitment practices – is the backbone of a healthy workforce and a healthy economy. Despite high employment rates in Bristol, wage disparity persists, with 22,000 residents earning below the Real Living Wage.⁹⁶ Part-time and precarious work are concentrated in certain areas, such as Avonmouth and Lawrence Hill,

where 34% of people are employed in part-time work, and Southmead, where 7% of residents are on zero-hour contracts (compared to the Bristol average of 2%).⁹⁷ Demand for part-time work is often driven by individuals’ personal circumstances – from caring responsibilities to health needs, or desire for flexibility in order to pursue other opportunities. However, given the significant increase in part-time jobs in Bristol over the last decade, we want to work with partners to investigate what is driving this trend in Bristol and what this means for our workforce.

Good work practices are particularly relevant to our night-time economy businesses and workforce. Over 116,000 jobs operate between 6pm and 6am, representing over 40% of the city’s employment.⁹⁸ Priorities around safety and health and wellbeing, as well as pay and secure employment are important for retaining and supporting this workforce. Our night-time economy is made up of a range of activities from health and social care, warehousing and logistics to hospitality and nightlife. Between 2012- 2022 employment in night-time industries in Bristol increased faster than all other core cities, except for Manchester who follow a similar growth rate.

⁹⁶ ONS, Number and proportion of employee jobs with hourly pay below the living wage (2024).

⁹⁷ ONS, Annual Population Survey (2023).

⁹⁸ ONS Centre for Subnational Analysis, Employment in night-time industries-UK (2022).



The Employment Rights Bill (2024) will enshrine some of the principles around good work in law.⁹⁹ We will continue to work with businesses and employers to champion fair employment and just labour markets within our city economy. We know that Bristol businesses often see themselves as not just employers in our city, but as active partners in communities who want to work together to uplift local talent, foster long-term growth and create a more equitable and prosperous city.

Bristol's thriving VCSE sector, composed of 1,495 charities and 316 social enterprises, lies at the heart of the city's social economy contributing an estimated £292m per year in GVA and employing over 5,868 FTEs.¹⁰⁰ As employers, funders, owners, and managers of community assets, the VCSE sector plays a crucial role in attracting investment into our local centres and retaining money within communities to the benefit of our local residents and places.

Rising demand, increasing complex support needs, and growing competition for funding are creating pressures for our local groups, where the loss of core organisations and/or facilities often ripples across the wider economy and can lead to the underserving of local communities and causes. Continued support for the VCSE sector is essential to empower residents, maintain local prosperity, and ensure the resilience of Bristol's economy and communities. We will work with the VCSE sector to ensure that our social economy has the right financial and business skills, including through our partnership with Social Economy West.

Community ownership can help embed regenerative and sustainable practices within our economy, ensuring that wealth is shared across the city and that local groups and businesses are able to manage assets for the benefit of the community. We will continue to support participatory and democratic methods that enable communities to take an active role in decision-making and resource management, empowering them to shape the future of their local economy. For example, by building our cooperative and mutuals sector base and supporting community energy projects, which enable local communities to generate and control their own energy, reduce environmental impact, and reinvest profits locally. The Bristol Music Fund could be another example of how we can use alternative business models to support local wealth building and regenerative economic practices. This fund, which aims to support local music venues, rehearsal spaces, and promoters, could help to nurture local talent, create vibrant cultural hubs, and ensure that the benefits of the music industry are felt within the community.

Community asset transfers allow groups to manage key assets, transforming them into vibrant hubs of activity that serve local needs. These kinds of community-led initiatives help foster resilience, create sustainable livelihoods, and nurture a sense of shared responsibility, building a more inclusive economy where resources are used efficiently and promote long-term prosperity for all.



⁹⁹ UK Parliament, Employment Rights Bill (2024).

¹⁰⁰ Voscur, Bristol VCSE Strategy: Into a New Era 2019-2029 (2019).

Our priorities to deliver a Fair Bristol include:

- Address in-work poverty through Bristol Living Wage City, focusing on low pay sectors, engaging businesses through campaigns and providing support through peer networks.
- Work with employers to champion good work practices to address under representation of equalities groups in managerial and professional occupations and work with the equality commissions to address pay gaps.
- Address workforce shortages and raise the profile of the caring economy through a collaboration with Value the Caring Economy Alliance (childcare infrastructure, care workers and care givers) and regional partners to explore piloting initiatives to enhance employment conditions, pay and training.

Our priorities to deliver a Green Bristol include:

- Promote the Community Energy Fund to support projects in areas at risk of exclusion from the just transition.
- Support communities in deprived areas to invest in, and benefit from, green energy through participatory models, working with the VCSE sector and established networks.
- Develop our food and drink sector, increasing local production and supply chains through technical skills and a network of community facilities to support our food and drink entrepreneurs and SMEs.

Our priorities to deliver a Thriving Bristol include:

- Increase community ownership of local assets and properties including through Community Asset Transfers and Community Land Trusts.
- Leverage the council's purchasing power to support local suppliers, in particular small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Work with the Integrated Care Partnership and One City partners to secure new funding for health and work initiatives and ensure Healthier Together 2040 promotes the link between good health and the economy, with a focus on helping people access and maintain employment.
- Build our social economy (including cooperatives and mutuals) through work with third sector representative bodies to understand the specific VCSE support needs to improve sector resilience, including upskilling local leaders and training on effective financial and business planning.
- Advocate for our night time economy employers and workforce, improving safety and health and wellbeing outcomes for the sector, sharing our best practice on national and international platforms.