



Let's Work Together

A Christian Manifesto
for Bristol



Preface

Bristol is great, one of the country's 'go to' cities, rapidly expanding and growing in wealth. Paradoxically that very success is bringing with it increasing levels of poverty and inequality, just at the time when the government continues to withdraw billions of pounds from the social welfare budget.

Local councils, on their own, will increasingly struggle to meet the growing challenge. Fortunately the Christian Community along with other voluntary groups have long experience and a successful track record of working in this area. In order to maximize the effectiveness of the efforts of the Council and the voluntary sector the existing collaboration between the various groups needs to be strengthened.

The key message of the Manifesto is a plea, for the sake of the city, for collaborative working, it cites examples of what the Christian Community is already doing and also what we believe the Mayor and the Council could do to enhance that significant effort. It is not intended, therefore, that the manifesto will address all of the issues that concern the people of Bristol or even all the important

issues: for example the Environment and Social Cohesion, which includes Racial Equality issues (see *Appendices B and C*).

This Manifesto focuses on social issues, but we are aware that God is interested in the whole of life, the good and happy parts of our lives as well as the other, but we also are aware that He is hugely concerned for those who struggle with this life, a constantly recurring and prominent theme in the Bible.

This Manifesto was written by a group of Christians. It is commended by 'Churches Together in Greater Bristol' and the 'Bristol and District Branch of the Evangelical Alliance'. It was written in the light of the forthcoming council and mayoral elections in Bristol in May 2016. As well as seeking to address the

candidates and the population of Bristol in the forthcoming elections, this document is also intended to help the Christian community think about some of the issues which matter to us and to all the people of Bristol, to act as a resource when questioning those who are standing for election and to assist in considering the responses we receive. We hope and pray that a more informed election debate will influence, in a positive and helpful way, how people vote.

We are simply inhabitants of Bristol with a heart for our city and its people who we serve and for God who we also serve. We hope this Manifesto will become a 'living document' that develops over time. We would welcome any comments you may have: you can find contact details at the end.

Summary of Key Policy Areas

Housing and Homelessness

Let us work together to meet the problem of Housing which is probably the single greatest challenge facing our city. Homelessness cannot be solved without providing enough homes.

Education and Opportunity

Let us work together to strive to ensure that all children in Bristol have the same opportunity to realise their potential and counter the disparity of opportunity which is evident in different parts of the city.

Health and Wellbeing

Let us work together to urgently address the issues behind the huge disparity between the length and quality of life (mind, body and spirit) experienced by different Bristolians.

Community and Families

Let us work together to strengthen local communities and the families and households that make them up. There is an identifiable Christian presence in all of our wards and neighbourhoods. The support given by Churches across the city often includes buildings which act as places for community activities from Weight Watchers to gospel choirs. Many congregations and fellowships also provide a wide range of direct services.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees - Bristol is a 'City of Sanctuary'

Let us work together to grasp the opportunity and challenge that our refugee community presents to our city. Bristol is a 'City of Sanctuary', as Christians we respond by looking forward to continued partnership in this cause with people of faith and goodwill.

Business, Employment and Skills

Let us work together to bring a new sense of hope to those that are unemployed or that struggle to gain employment as a result of challenging lifestyles (for example: those coming from an addiction or a background of offending).

Voluntary Sector and Representation

Let us work together to improve the wellbeing of the residents of our city. Bristol City Council, the faith communities and other parts of the voluntary sector in Bristol are deeply committed to this. There is a tradition of working together which we believe can be developed for the good of all of our fellow residents.

Key Policy Areas	5	Asylum Seekers and Refugees - Bristol is a ‘City of Sanctuary’	9
Housing and Homelessness	5	I13 We befriend refugees and asylum seekers	
I1 We provide practical care for the homeless		I14 We provide practical support to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into our city	
I2 We build relationships with the disengaged		I15 We provide shelter to asylum seekers experiencing destitution	
I3 We provide tenancy support		Q13 You can challenge national policy inconsistencies with regards to refugees	
Q1 You can encourage cooperation		Q14 You can make the refugee community a budgetary priority	
Q2 You can develop fast-track systems		Q15 You can the declare the equal worth of all residents of Bristol	
Q3 You can ask us for help		Business, Employment and Skills	10
Education and Opportunity	6	I16 We provide employment opportunities for ex-offenders	
I4 We are committed to provide excellent education for all young people		I17 We provide sustainable social investment for the benefit of the city	
I5 We help young people realise their potential through youth groups and volunteering		I18 We protect our environment by encouraging upcycling and reuse and at the same time create training an employment opportunities	
I6 We raise awareness about the remarkable Christian heritage of the city		Q16 You can encourage further investment in supporting disadvantaged people and communities	
Q4 You can encourage more governors from the Christian community and more collaboration between school leaders		Q17 You can commit to encouraging all businesses to pay a Living Wage	
Q5 You can commit to tackle the low attainment of disadvantaged children		Q18 You can commit to investment across all parts of the city in a fairer way	
Q6 You can continue to fund services for young people, including projects run by the Christian community		Voluntary Sector and Representation	11
Health and Wellbeing	7	I19 We provide people and facilities to support flexible and responsive services	
I7 We are involved in the wellbeing of the whole person		I20 We affirm the importance of the spiritual	
I8 We commit resources to the recovery of people with addiction		I21 We are sensitive to matters of faith and culture	
I9 We holistically seek physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing		Q19 You can recognise the importance of faith within the voluntary sector	
Q7 You can prioritise Health and Wellbeing with a City Health Commissioner		Q20 You can work with the faith communities to build community cohesion	
Q8 You can further empower the Health and Wellbeing Board		Q21 You can educate the statutory services about the importance of faith	
Q9 You can work with the Christian community to alleviate social isolation		Appendix A The Role of the Mayor in Bristol	12
Community and Families	8	Appendix B The Environment	12
I10 We run foodbanks which fed 15,000 families last year		Appendix C Social Inclusion	13
I11 We support families in providing stable, secure and loving homes		Appendix D Biblical Resources	13
I12 We work to help build stronger and safer communities		Appendix E Christian Agencies Referred to in the Manifesto	14
Q10 You can raise the priority for dealing with poverty and inequality		Appendix F Sources	15
Q11 You can convene annual meetings with Christian groups that support families			
Q12 You can proactively make the faith communities in Bristol an integral part of neighbourhood conversations.			

Context

This document describes some of the Christian community's involvement in the life of the city and also how, by enhancing coordination with the work the council is doing, we could together do so much more. We believe that the Mayor has a pivotal role in this process and are keen to work with whoever is elected.

Good aspects of Bristol

Bristol is a great city to live in: it is growing rapidly, with over 4,000 new residents every year; it is thriving economically, the third wealthiest city in the country ^[NSM]; culturally vibrant, ethnically mixed and a major centre for innovation and research. Bristol is one of the cities where students stay after having attended university here and has more green space per person than any other city in our country. There is a vibrant voluntary sector within which the Christian community plays a significant part. Christians are deeply involved in the city at all levels, contributing to wealth creation and the associated generation of employment, wellbeing and social integration.

Challenges for Bristol

Bristol has its challenges: paradoxically, the wealthier the city gets the greater the problems, for instance people moving into the city places pressure on housing which pushes rents up and creates homelessness. After London, Bristol has the second highest number of homeless people sleeping rough on a regular basis ^[GUA]. There are 14,000 people on the waiting list for affordable housing ^[B247-1]. Other challenges include long term unemployment, rehabilitation of offenders, family stability, substance misuse, lack of fitness, problems with integration of refugees and asylum seekers and an ineffective transport system. It is to the credit of the city that much is already being done, but we could do so much more.

A Community of Faith

Christians believe that God is intimately involved in our world and our city in all of its aspects, which is why our faith, prayer and service must reflect this. Each one of us is a part of humanity and is called to make a contribution to the wellbeing of each other. We believe that God values all equally, regardless of our individual differences. He calls us to do the same.

The benefits of a fully functional society

It is in all our interests for the city to be a place where people are gainfully employed, living in decent quality homes with access to communal activities with local jobs and shops. Where, for instance, places lack good housing this results in mental and physical health issues that creates cost for the NHS and social services, prevents people from working and, thereby contributing to society, encourages a gang culture with resultant criminal behaviour, substance misuse issues, poor school attendance, and all the relational and behavioural issues and the costs of a swelling prison population. The same applies to many other social issues. As Christians we believe that those who need help should receive it, those who can help should do so generously but in a way that empowers people rather than creating dependency.

Economic background

Bristol is the third ^[NSM] wealthiest city in the country and growing. It is thought that second only to London, Bristol has the greatest gap between the rich and the poor of any city in the UK, the gap is widening ^[BP1]. The Government is withdrawing from social care provision, which places a growing burden on local communities to fill that gap. Year after year the City Council is required to do more with less.

The Christian community's role as part of the city

The Christian community is already very active in the city: there are many Christians involved in organisations like the NHS, the prison service, education, participating in local neighbourhood groups, as well as volunteering for charities of many types. There are a number of Christian organisations working with the homeless, sex-workers, refugees and asylum seekers. The Christian community is the largest employer of youth workers in the city. All these activities work best when they are integrated with the work of statutory bodies, other charities and other faiths. The Christian initiatives referred to in this document are a small sample of the wide breadth and depth of services provided.

The Christian community makes up about 8% of the population of Bristol. Its membership is drawn from across the social and demographic spectrum. Its membership has a significant mix of resources, as well as a deep commitment to its fellow residents, irrespective of diversity.

What the city could do to facilitate the work of the Christian community

We believe that to develop the partnership between the City Council and the Christian community will result in a significant contribution to the city.

As Christians we believe that God has mandated the whole of mankind to work for the good of society, and that we are given the stewardship of resources to be used for the good of all, and not kept to ourselves. Christians cannot avoid that challenge.

The more we work together the stronger we will be.

Key Policy Areas

Housing and Homelessness

Let us work together to meet the problem of Housing which is probably the single greatest challenge facing our city. Homelessness cannot be solved without providing enough homes.

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing...

I1 We provide practical care for the homeless

Church groups provide a great deal of practical help for homeless people, supplying food and clothing throughout the year, with blankets and sleeping bags being distributed in the cold months. The Bristol Soup Run Trust provides food every night of the year, serving around 20,000 meals each year; the Wild Goose provides meals six nights a week, serving around 120,000 meals each year. Groups such as Streetlife and the Bristol Methodist Centre provide food and many other services.

I2 We build relationships with the disengaged

Many of the most entrenched needy people in our city are not engaging with the statutory services which have been provided to help them, which is one significant reason why they are in that situation. The services provided by the church-based groups provide a context in which relationships with these people are built; through the trust which is established, they can be introduced to the long term statutory help they require.

I3 We provide tenancy support

Much of the pastoral care provided by churches and Christian groups to members of their local communities has the effect of enabling people to maintain their mortgages and tenancies, primarily through addressing debt problems and preventing family breakdown. Groups like Christians Against Poverty provide high quality financial advice.

Three things we would like to see...

Q1 You can encourage cooperation

The only way we will be able to deliver effective services to the people of Bristol is by the public-funded and voluntary groups working together more effectively. Partnership and cooperation must develop at all levels, which will require some changes of policy and function on both sides.

Q2 You can develop fast-track systems

One concrete way in which improved partnership can produce a more effective service at reduced cost is through recognising the work undertaken by selected voluntary sector groups as a valid alternative engagement pathway. This would avoid the delays caused by clients who, through patient work by the voluntary group, are finally ready to accept help from the statutory service but then have to start from the beginning in the official system, waiting for appointments and needing to prove that they are ready to be helped. Much of this initial work is unnecessary, costs time and money, and delaying help sometimes means that the client is no longer ready to be helped by the time it is available.

Q3 You can ask us for help

Through improved partnership, the statutory services can more effectively help those clients who have a strong relationship with one of more voluntary sector groups. For example, when there is the possibility of 'bed-blocking' with one of these people, it is worth seeking to work in partnership with the voluntary sector groups, to avoid either bed-blocking on the one hand, or the client being discharged without adequate accommodation and support in place on the other.

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Education and Opportunity

Let us work together to strive to ensure that all children in Bristol have the same opportunity to realise their potential and counter the disparity of opportunity which is evident in different parts of the city.

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing...

I4 We are committed to provide excellent education for all young people

Some schools with a faith background, such as several Oasis Academies, have transformed schools. Others, such as St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School are outstanding and have taken a lead in collaborating with other schools, to share best practice and improve standards. There are numerous excellent Head teachers, governors, teachers and others working in education, who are motivated by their Christian faith.

I5 We help young people realise their potential through youth groups and volunteering

Churches and Christian organisations have set up about 150 youth groups and clubs to connect with young people in Bristol. Many of these are making a big difference in the more deprived areas of Bristol, such as “The Noise” or “Enough”, a youth project in Hartcliffe. As part of “The Noise” in 2015, 400 young people between the age of 5-18 volunteered, in Family and Youth group teams, (with 920 volunteers in total). Other excellent projects include “Black Boys Can” and New Testament Church of God’s “Stride” youth group, which help black teenagers achieve their best in education.

I6 We raise awareness about the remarkable Christian heritage of the city

The remarkable Christian heritage of the city is being communicated in schools through Residentsip, RE and other aspects of the school curriculum. For example, the George Muller Foundation has produced free resources for lessons and assemblies, to raise awareness among the next generation about George Muller’s faith and social concern for orphans in 19th century Bristol. These resources are available for wider use.

Three things we would like to see...

Q4 You can encourage more governors from the Christian community and more collaboration between school leaders

We welcome the big improvements in Bristol secondary schools in the last few years as a result of good leadership, collaboration between schools and hard work. Bristol is a Learning City and values education. We would like to see more high quality governors, especially from the Christian community. We also ask for increased collaboration between school leaders, including faith schools such as St Mary Redcliffe and Temple School, to share best practice and help improve standards.

Q5 You can commit to tackle the low attainment of disadvantaged children

We would like to see the Mayor commit to tackle the low attainment of disadvantaged children. The attainment of pupils who receive free school meals is below the national level across all ages, and the gap with their peers is widening. Educators are doing their best to help young people make a positive contribution to society. But educators need the help of society, especially to help the most vulnerable young people and their families. And yet there have been cutbacks to all the support networks. Funding and support is needed for the most vulnerable and marginalised, for example for mental health and youth services.

Q6 You can continue to fund services for young people, including projects run by the Christian community

Through the Bristol Youth Links contracts, Bristol City Council has supported services for young people in a way that many other local authorities haven’t managed to do. This should be recognised and applauded. However, as the council comes under more financial pressure, these services could be threatened again. Continued funding is essential. Young people should be kept as a priority to maintain a thriving city for all. Again, faith communities can offer substantial “added value” in this area. This includes youth projects run by the Christian community, such as “The Noise” and “Enough”. “Black Boys Can” and “Stride” help teenagers to be mentored and give help with education. They also help raise the awareness of teachers and police and help them engage with minority groups.

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Health and Wellbeing

Let us work together to urgently address the issues behind the huge disparity between the length and quality of life (mind, body and spirit) experienced by different Bristolians.

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing.

I7 We are involved in the wellbeing of the whole person

A few churches are becoming hubs for community service and are centres for health and fitness linked to Parish Nurses and GP Practices. Christians believe that the promotion of flourishing and wellbeing, in addition to prevention rather than cure, is the key to health. So these new and innovative approaches to delivering healthcare have been developed, based on building relationships and loving the whole person: spiritual, emotional as well as physical. This includes the Disability Network (wanting to see communities enriched and blessed by the full involvement of disabled people and their families) and also community initiatives serving those who are most vulnerable by providing a community space, for example cafe and/or education on issues such as low self-worth and eating disorders; healthy lifestyle choices, such as diet, exercise and non-smoking; and disease prevention, such as heart disease, diabetes and sexually transmitted diseases, for example the Hope Community Church “Living Free” course and Sea Mills Community Initiatives.

I8 We commit resources to the recovery of people with addiction

Bristol has one of the largest addiction problems in the United Kingdom. The Christian community has taken the initiative in growing a local addiction network which connects over a hundred Christians involved in helping free people from addiction. Life Recovery Groups are operating across the city, a cross-church recovery community supporting men and women who have been affected either directly or indirectly, by any kind of addiction or life controlling issue. In addition, many Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) and Narcotics Anonymous (NA) groups meet in church buildings.

I9 We holistically seek physical, mental and spiritual wellbeing

The promotion of physical, mental and spiritual health and wellbeing is at the heart of our activities. We believe that God loves us all and cares about every aspect of our being. Where possible, we provide a Christian presence for example chaplains in prisons and hospitals. The HOTS^[BNW] (Healing on the Street) team, prays with anyone who seeks their support and, after being prayed for, many have found healing or comfort. Many of the initiatives cited in the rest of this document address mental health issues, for example housing, families, food, inclusion, social isolation and equality.

Three things we would like to see...

Q7 You can prioritise Health and Wellbeing with a City Health Commissioner

We would like to see Health and Wellbeing prioritised in the City and would support the development of a ‘City Health Commissioner’ tasked with directing and resourcing the mental and physical healthcare needs of the Bristol population. We can then liaise with them to enable our existing resources and structures to be best used for the good of the city (for example our 200+ church buildings and Christian projects such as those mentioned here). We would also like to see the Public Health Director reinstated to the most senior band below the City Director.

Q8 You can further empower the Health and Wellbeing Board

We would like to empower the Health and Wellbeing Board to see the development and enforcement of Health Impact Assessments for every major new and existing policy to ensure community life-lines are protected, maintained and enhanced, and harmful impacts on the health and wellbeing of the population are mitigated.

Q9 You can work with the Christian community to alleviate social isolation

We recognise that social isolation is a far greater health issue than smoking and that the crisis in Adult Social Care is overwhelming. We would love to be a city in which people can age with dignity and without fear and we would therefore seek to work with the City Council to build social capital, by being more intentional and strategic in how we offer our buildings and services. The Christian community could, for example, from its existing initiatives, provide many outlets for Social Prescribing.

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Community and Families

Let us work together to strengthen local communities and the families and households that make them up. There is an identifiable Christian presence in all of our wards and neighbourhoods. The support given by Churches across the city often includes buildings which act as places for community activities from Weight Watchers to gospel choirs. Many congregations and fellowships also provide a wide range of direct services.

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing...

I10 We run foodbanks which fed 15,000 families last year

In 2015, 25% of children lived in poverty in Bristol ^[BP2] and around 15,000 households were fed by Foodbanks run by churches. There are more than 20 outlets for food, most of which are linked together under the 5K Partnership. These receive referrals from hundreds of agencies across the area. We want to see a reduction in the reasons why people need foodbanks, including the end of absolute poverty especially among some pensioners and people with disabilities, but while there is a need, the foodbanks are developing “*more than food*” services - advice, training and signposting to other agencies including debt projects such as Christians Against Poverty.

I11 We support families in providing stable, secure and loving homes

Locally Head teachers and others are reporting that children’s educational attainment is severely hampered by their domestic situations. Churches support parents and children in improving the lives of their families. The work is diverse, from supporting those in crisis, to giving parents confidence through parenting initiatives and running toddler groups - simply creating space for parents and carers with their children to have fun and meet each other. Such work is often volunteer led, but is carried out with professionalism and the promotion of a safe environment. One of the recent initiatives is the voluntary support being offered in the Family Court, where people are frequently having to represent themselves in one of the most traumatic experiences of their lives. Around 25 churches are linked together in their work on families through the National Parenting Initiative and there are good examples of experienced parents mentoring others through schemes such as “*Parent Buddies*”. Several groups promote foster care and adoption among the Christian community to help children needing temporary or permanent care away from their birth families.

I12 We work to help build stronger and safer communities

With our diverse locations we see what is happening in the communities across Bristol. We support the building up and regenerating of communities and reducing issues such as social isolation. This happens through simple regular events such as community lunches but also through big annual events such as “*The Noise*.” This takes place each May Bank Holiday coordinated by the local churches, with well over 1000 volunteers of all ages, helping to serve their local communities in practical ways, including through Family Fun Events. In terms of the creating a safer City, Bristol Street Pastors are providing a weekly night-time presence from 10pm to 4am on the streets of the Centre. They provide practical support to the vulnerable and a calming presence in many situations.

Three things we would like to see...

Q10 You can raise the priority for dealing with poverty and inequality

Long-term poverty and increasing inequality are accepted as priority issues for the city. We would love to see the life chances of so many people being restored by the coordinated efforts of many groups with the leadership of the Mayor.

Q11 You can convene annual meetings with Christian groups that support families

We would love to see the Mayor convene a meeting with Christian groups supporting families on an annual basis, recognising that churches are part of a coordinated network of formal and informal provision which supports the achievement of the City Council’s aims for family life.

Q12 You can proactively make the faith communities in Bristol an integral part of neighbourhood conversations.

Christians are deeply involved with the city, as parents and foster parents, neighbours, shoppers, friends and counsellors. They are employed as Social Workers, run many parent and toddlers groups, and parenting courses, sit on the boards of many schools and are often found helping to run street parties, May Fairs and other neighbourhood building events. We would encourage the Mayor to publicly and regularly recognise the work undertaken by the faith community and to pro-actively develop the extent to which that community is involved in both formal and informal multi-tier neighbourhood discussions with council officials.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees - Bristol is a 'City of Sanctuary'

Let us work together to grasp the opportunity and challenge that our refugee community presents to our city. Bristol is a 'City of Sanctuary', as Christians we respond by looking forward to continued partnership in this cause with people of faith and goodwill.

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing...

I13 We befriend refugees and asylum seekers

B.friend is a project that does 'what it says on the tin' and enables people to befriend asylum seekers and refugees in Bristol. It also runs a craft collective for asylum seeking women which meets in Central Bristol and "makes beautiful things for the women and for the collective to sell." This project has the active support of a number of churches including Severn Vineyard.

I14 We provide practical support to integrate refugees and asylum seekers into our city

Borderlands was set up by St Nicholas of Tolentino Church in Lawford's Gate, but is now a separate charity. This charity runs a drop in two days a week at the Tolentino Hall which offers food, clothing, English language classes and help with immigration issues, as well as a real welcome and community. Their strapline is "from exclusion to belonging". They also seek to educate the general public on the situation of asylum seekers and refugees in order to promote their inclusion in Bristol society.

I15 We provide shelter to asylum seekers experiencing destitution

Bristol Hospitality Network (BHN) provides full board accommodation in host households or in its large house for men in Bristol. It also enables community volunteering opportunities and runs a social enterprise in solidarity with both male and female asylum seekers experiencing destitution. In addition, BHN runs a drop in one day a week at Easton Family Centre, offering welcome, food, clothing, English language classes and advocacy with asylum issues.

Three things we would like to see...

Q13 You can challenge national policy inconsistencies with regards to refugees

You can challenge the national policy inconsistencies: when we are seemingly hospitable to unaccompanied Syrian children, but refuse to see the need of those who are in camps in Calais. There is much goodwill in Bristol, as can be seen from the convoys and other initiatives that have gone out to Calais from here. Could the Mayor work with us on a campaign for a more humane policy in this area?

Q14 You can make the refugee community a budgetary priority

We would like to see the Mayor making a budgetary priority of work with the refugee community in Bristol. These are amongst the most deprived and vulnerable residents of Bristol and we would like to ask that the Mayor puts their money where their City of Sanctuary mouth is. We of course applaud our city for being one of the first Cities of Sanctuary in the UK but ask for practical steps to be taken to make this concrete in budgetary and policy terms.

Q15 You can the declare the equal worth of all residents of Bristol

As a foundation for all other actions, we as Christians would love to see the mayor publicly declare the equal worth of all Bristol residents. As Christians we believe in the God-given worth of all humans, but political rhetoric about some residents of Bristol can be unhelpful and lead to consequences in the unequal treatment of people by others in daily life. We would like the Mayor to challenge those who seek to demonize and scapegoat particular people in our city, and to get to know personally those from the refugee community who make an outstanding contribution to our city and its welfare.

The more we work together the stronger we will be.

Business, Employment and Skills

Let us work together to bring a new sense of hope to those that are unemployed or that struggle to gain employment as a result of challenging lifestyles (for example: those coming from an addiction or a background of offending).

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing...

I16 We provide employment opportunities for ex-offenders

Bristol Together is a project based on a financially sustainable social impact bond model originally set up in 2011 to fund the purchase and refurbishment of empty residential properties and create jobs for ex-offenders. Now in its fourth year, Bristol Together has successfully refurbished numerous properties to a very high standard and created training and employment for over 50 young ex-offenders. Many of them have now moved into self-employment as builders, or are working with other building companies. Over that time the re-offending rate has been almost zero.

I17 We provide sustainable social investment for the benefit of the city

Resonance Bristol Sitr Fund is in the process of setting up a social investment fund for the city, with the aim of tackling poverty. The fund provides the opportunity for individuals to invest in social enterprise across the city that will enable upscaling of their operations to create increased employment and impact. The first £1million will be invested in the next few months, with a further £2-3 million being raised over the rest of the year. This is the first example of an Sitr fund at scale in the UK.

I18 We protect our environment by encouraging upcycling and reuse and at the same time create training and employment opportunities

Changing Lives was originally set up in Clevedon; but it now has a Bristol wide focus. Set up in 2010, the business has grown to a significant scale and is focused on creating value out of recycled and up-cycled goods. In so doing, training and employment opportunities are being created at several locations across the city. Plans are also in place to significantly upscale the operation to create even more impact.

Three things we would like to see...

Q16 You can encourage further investment in supporting disadvantaged people and communities

We would like to see the Mayor encouraging the business and commercial sector to invest more in social enterprise, and to set aside a percentage of their profits in creating training and employment opportunities for the more disadvantaged in the city. We see this as an investment that will create a return to the benefit of all stakeholders.

Q17 You can commit to encouraging all businesses to pay a Living Wage

We would like to see the Mayor encouraging all businesses to adopt a policy committed to paying the Living Wage based on the cost of living (as described by the Living Wage Foundation ^[LWF]) as a minimum to all employees, and to move away from the unfair imposition of zero-hours contracts. We recognise that this may not be achievable overnight, but we would like to see substantial progress in this area during the Mayor's term in office.

Q18 You can commit to investment across all parts of the city in a fairer way

We would further like to see a commitment from the Mayor to invest in all parts of the city, and thereby to address the current disparity between the wealthy city core and some of the poorer areas. It is fundamentally wrong, we believe, that in Lawrence Hill, which is less than a kilometre from Temple Quay, more than 50% of the children live below the poverty line ^[B247-2]. We believe it is incumbent on the business sector to play a key role in addressing these issues.

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Voluntary Sector and Representation

Let us work together to improve the wellbeing of the residents of our city. Bristol City Council, the faith communities and other parts of the voluntary sector in Bristol are deeply committed to this. There is a tradition of working together which we believe can be developed for the good of all of our fellow residents.

Three examples of what the Christian community is already doing...

I19 We provide people and facilities to support flexible and responsive services

The churches in Bristol provide many of the staff and volunteers within the voluntary sector, and we provide many of the meeting places where voluntary sector groups operate. As needs arise and change, we are able to modify what we do far faster than services which are based on contracts and key performance targets. Practical support for an innovative response is often initiated in the churches before it is picked up in the wider community.

I20 We affirm the importance of the spiritual

In a secular and materialistic society, we articulate the need to uphold spiritual and human values. In an environment of decreasing budgets and increasing performance targets, it is easy for decisions to be driven by the needs of the organisations (to manage budgets and meet targets) at the expense of the people they are seeking to help. Service delivery must be done in a dignified and caring way, as well as a cost-effective one. People of faith do not have a monopoly on such concerns, but they do have expertise, experience and other resources to draw on in recognising and managing such tensions.

I21 We are sensitive to matters of faith and culture

People who engage with matters of faith are often more aware of the ways in which faith and culture affect other areas of life, and are able to help deliver services to people from other faiths and cultures in a sensitive and appropriate way. People from countries where faith plays a more public role in the society often find it easier to relate to other people of faith than they do to people who operate from a secular or humanist perspective; and they are often more comfortable within faith-based groups for the same reason.

Three things we would like to see...

Q19 You can recognise the importance of faith within the voluntary sector

Official support for the voluntary sector is normally provided on the basis that the organisation is essentially secular in its operation. This assumption serves to marginalise the groups working from a faith perspective, at a time when their work is needed more than ever.

Q20 You can work with the faith communities to build community cohesion

This is, in principle, accepted practice. It is not being worked out in practice as much as it could be because of the approach which is often adopted: a statutory body has a plan, and then seeks the involvement of the local faith community to implement it. Effective engagement would start instead with a proposal to work together towards a shared goal, and then work jointly on developing a plan; the faith community is then likely to be behind the plan and keen to assist in implementing it.

Q21 You can educate the statutory services about the importance of faith

If an effective partnership of the statutory services with the voluntary sector and faith communities is to work, then the common prejudice against religious faith must be addressed, as other common prejudices are already being addressed. Taking the meaning of 'faith' in its normal sense of 'trust based on evidence,' then all the things which make up a normal life are based on faith, as is all effective social work. Recognising the faith basis of your own actions is an important starting point for effectively engaging with people who operate on a different faith basis.

The more we work together the stronger we will be.

Appendix A

The Role of the Mayor in Bristol

The Mayor of Bristol has specific powers and responsibilities that are generally outlined in a short but formal document issued by the Council: *'Bristol City Council and an Elected Mayor'*. However the Mayor's role is much wider than that stated as they have considerable influence. For example, because Bristol is one of the group of *'Core Cities'* the Mayor of Bristol is in a position to influence government and national debate. This includes the

current question as to whether Central Government should delegate more powers to local Government and by extension Mayors.

This manifesto focuses on the potential of the Mayor to work with the faith communities to improve the well-being of all its residents and particularly the growing number of poor and homeless. To do so will bring benefit to everyone.

Extract from the Council's document *'Bristol City Council and an Elected Mayor'*:

Regulatory, Corporate and Ethical Functions

The law requires that there are a number of local authority functions which are *'not to be the responsibility of an authority's executive'* so some important decisions will continue to be taken independently of an elected Mayor. In brief these functions are:

- Functions relating to town and country planning and development (Development Control Planning Committees)
- Licensing and registration functions (Licensing Committee, Public Safety and Protection Committee)
- Functions relating to health and safety at work (Public Safety and Protection Committee)
- Functions relating to elections (Full Council, Selection Committee and officer delegation)
- Functions relating to name and status of areas and individuals (i.e. changing the name of a district, conferring titles of Honorary Alderman etc.) (Full Council)
- Functions related to public rights of way (Public Rights of Way and Greens Committee)
- Power to make, amend revoke or re-enact by laws (Full Council)
- Functions relating to (local government) pensions, power to appoint staff, and to determine the terms and conditions on which they hold office - including procedures for their dismissal (Human Resources Committee, Selection Committee, Appeals Committee)
- Duty to approve the local authority's statement of accounts, income, expenditure and balance sheet, review the effectiveness of the council's governance arrangements, risk management framework and internal control environment (Audit Committee)

Appendix B

The Environment

We are aware that the Council has already made Green issues a priority. These link to many of the other issues in this manifesto. As Christians we agree with this priority and we passionately believe that the world and all that is in it belongs to God, who expects us to care for the planet for the good of all, which leads many individual Christians to be passionate about Green issues.

Many are involved in the leadership of environmental projects, such as community allotments, which encourage growing our own food and healthy eating. Only a few organisations, like Green Christian are specifically Christian, although others have a faith background and were connected to many activities through Bristol Green Capital in 2015.

Over the last few years they have fought for better, more affordable, public transport and cheaper, more sustainable heating, making sure green issues were linked to poverty and justice issues.

Many Christians campaigned for global justice and sustainable development, through the Bristol Fairtrade Network, Climate Justice and Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Global Aware Bristol (a unique local group involving Christian Aid, CAFOD, Tearfund, the Diocese of Bristol, Woodlands church and others) has also organised several conferences for hundreds of people, on these issues. They help raise awareness and encourage action, such as campaigning. There is, however, much more awareness raising and action on environmental issues needed by the Christian community as a whole.

Green issues should be linked to poverty alleviation, all too often suggested solutions can work to the detriment of the already poor. We would, for instance, suggest that if we want people to use public transport, we address those areas in Bristol (frequently poorer parts of the city) where the provision public transport is inadequate and the cost of fares penalize the already poor.

The more we work together the stronger we will be.

Appendix C

Social Cohesion

Overt issues of racism and race inequality are less common than they were in the previous generation, yet there are still parts of Bristol where black and minority ethnic (BME) people are simply not welcome by some of the inhabitants. There are still examples of institutional racism and various forms of practice that can adversely affect the black and other minority groups. It is noted that within the Council the Mayor, all the Assistant Mayors and the Council's five senior directors are white and very few councillors are black. As a Christian community we need to keep working on this problem, there are some truly multi ethnic churches, and some that are not, despite being located in ethnically mixed parts of Bristol.

Appendix D

Biblical Resources

(These are a small selection of many similar passages that can be found throughout the Bible)

Old Testament

The earth is the LORD's, and everything in it, the world, and all who live in it. [Psalm 24:1](#)

The LORD your God... gives you the ability to produce wealth. [Deuteronomy 8:18](#)

Seek the peace and prosperity of the city... Pray to the LORD for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper." [Jeremiah 29:7](#)

He has filled them with skill to do all kinds of work as engravers, designers, embroiderers... all of them skilled workers and designers. [Exodus 35:35](#)

Man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD. [Deuteronomy 8:3](#)

He has shown you, O mortal, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God. [Micah 6:8](#)

They have freely scattered their gifts to the poor; their righteousness endures for ever. [Psalm 112:9](#) *quoted in* [Corinthians 9:9](#)

When a foreigner resides among you in your land, do not ill-treat them. The foreigner residing among you must be treated as your native-born. Love them as yourself. [Leviticus 19:33-34](#)

Loose the chains of injustice... set the oppressed free and break every yoke share your food with the hungry... provide the poor wanderer with shelter. When you see the naked... clothe them. [Isaiah 58:6-7](#)

New Testament

Jesus: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favour." [Luke 4:18](#) *quoting from* [Isaiah 61](#)

God: "I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me."

The righteous: "Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you something to drink? When did we see you a stranger and invite you in or needing clothes and clothe you? When did we see you sick or in prison and go to visit you?"

God: "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." [Matthew 25:35-40](#)

Jesus: "I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full." [John 10:10](#)

Jesus: "For God so Loved the World that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." [John 3:16](#)

Jesus: "The greatest commandment is this: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your neighbour as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these." [Mark 12:29-31](#)

Scriptures taken from the Holy Bible, New International Version® Anglicized, NIV® Copyright © 1979, 1984, 2011 by Biblica, Inc.® Used by permission. All rights reserved worldwide

The more we work together the stronger we will be.

Appendix E - Christian Agencies Referred to in the Manifesto

5K Partnership

<http://www.5kpartnership.org.uk>

b.friend

<http://www.bridgesforcommunities.com/b-friend>

Borderlands

<http://borderlands.uk.com>

Bristol and Bath Disability Network

<http://Bristolbathdisabilitynetwork.wordpress.com>

Bristol Fairtrade Network

<http://www.bristolfairtrade.org.uk>

Bristol Hospitality Network

<https://bristolhospitalitynetwork.wordpress.com>

Bristol Methodist Centre

<http://www.methodist-centre.org.uk>

Bristol Networks ^[BNW]

www.bristolnetworks.org.uk/Articles/237841/Home/Action_Zones/Sport_and_Health/Features/Healing_on_the.aspx

Bristol Soup Run Trust

<http://www.bristolsoupruntrust.org.uk>

Bristol Street Pastors

<http://streetpastors.org/locations/bristol>

Bristol Together

<http://www.bristoltogether.co.uk>

CAFOD

<http://cafod.org.uk/>

Changing Lives

<http://www.changinglivesinclevedon.co.uk/cms>

Christian Aid

www.christianaid.org.uk

Christians Against Poverty

<https://capuk.org>

Enough

<http://www.404enough.co.uk>

George Muller Foundation

<http://www.mullers.org>

Hope Community Church

<http://hopechapel.co.uk/ministries>

Life Recovery Group

www.liferecoverygroup.org

National Parenting Initiative

<http://www.thenpi.org.uk>

Network Counselling

www.network.org.uk

Resonance SITR Fund

<http://www.resonance.ltd.uk/news/innovative-fund-opens-today-to-enable-investors-to-back-social-e>

Sea Mills Community Initiative

www.smci.org.uk

Streetlife

<https://www.streetlife.com>

Tearfund

<http://www.tearfund.org>

The Noise

<http://www.thenoise.org.uk>

University Hospitals Bristol

www.uhbristol.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/support-for-patients/department-spiritual-pastoral-care

Wild Goose

<http://www.crisis-centre.org.uk/content/wild-goose>

Other Christian initiatives can be found on: www.bristolnetworks.org.uk

Food Banks

Refugees and Asylum Seekers

Help for immigrants

Disabilities

Fairtrade

Destitute Asylum Seekers

Provides food and many other services

A Christian Community Networking Site

A soup run every night of the year

With police, give practical support/calming presence

Accommodation and jobs for ex-offenders

Official Catholic Aid Agency

Recycling, training and employment opportunities

Aid Agency – “An end to poverty”

Debt Advice

Young people’s activities in Hartcliffe and Withywood

Free resources for lessons and assemblies

A church aiming ‘to be a place of hope’

Addiction Recovery Community

Parenting Courses

Well-being in a Christian ethos

Investment scheme to create employment

Support for the vulnerable

Provides food and many other services

Evangelical Alliance Relief Agency

Community events in urban estates

NHS Department Spiritual Pastoral Care

120,000 meals annually for the homeless

Appendix F

Sources

Sources used in this Manifesto; this is a small sample of what is available

B24/7 [B247-1] 2014 - 14,000 waiting affordable homes

<http://www.bristol247.com/channel/news-comment/features/investigations/in-the-grip-of-a-housing-crisis>

B24/7 [B247-2] 2014 - Child Poverty in Bristol

<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-highest-child-poverty-figures-south-west/story-18198372-detail/story.html>

Bristol City Council Population Projections - Bristol City Council

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/33904/2012-based%20Population%20Projections%20Briefing%20note.pdf/60040fc2-2e94-441f-a8cc-cc9de6a5532b>

Bristol Fairness Commission Report June 2014 - Bristol City Council

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/documents/20182/35080/140630%20%20Fairness%20Commission%20final%20report%20FINAL.pdf/fb5c370f-0c99-442a-a64a1802b066b630>

Bristol needs a Mayor for Homes - National Housing Federation

<http://www.housing.org.uk/get-involved/our-public-campaigns/bristol-needs-a-mayor-for-homes/>

Bristol Post [BP1] 02-Sep-2015 - Bristol 5th most affluent city in UK

<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-named-fifth-affluent-city-UK/story-27721303-detail/story.html>

Bristol Post [BP2] 02-Sep-2015 - Quarter Children in Bristol in Poverty

<http://www.bristolpost.co.uk/Bristol-highest-child-poverty-figures-south-west/story-18198372-detail/story.html>

Bristol Youth Manifesto - Bristol City Council

https://www.bristol.gov.uk/search?p_p_id=webworxxsearch_WAR_webworxxportlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&_webworxxsearch_WAR_webworxxportlet_keepFilters=true&searchTerm=youth%20manifesto

Child Poverty Strategy - University College London

<http://www.instituteofhealthequity.org/>

Cutting Women Out in Bristol - Bristol City Council

https://www.bristol.gov.uk/search?p_p_id=webworxxsearch_WAR_webworxxportlet&p_p_lifecycle=0&_webworxxsearch_WAR_webworxxportlet_keepFilters=true&searchTerm=cutting%20women%20out

Fairness Commission (Bristol based) - Bristol City Council

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/mayor/fairness>

Green Christian - Bristol Group

<http://www.greenchristian.org.uk/>

Living Wage Foundation [LWF] - Residents UK

<http://www.livingwage.org.uk/what-living-wage>

Marmot Review 2010 Healthy Lives - University College London

<http://www.ucl.ac.uk/gh/marmotreview>

Mental Health Needs Assessment for the Bristol Population - Bristol Care Forum

<http://www.thecotsareforum.org/assets/files/Volunatry%20Sector/Presentations/Bristol%2026%20SEPT%20MENTAL%20HEALTH%20NEEDS%20ASSESSMENT%20cg300811.pdf>

New Start Magazine [NSM] 27-Jul-15 - Bristol 3rd Wealthiest City

<http://bristol.newstartmag.co.uk/your-blogs/making-change-happen-bristols-challenge>

Quartet Community Foundation - Matchers Funders with Charities

<http://quartetcf.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/bristol-area-profile-final.pdf>

The Guardian [GUA] 09-Mar-16 - Bristol 2nd highest rough sleepers

<http://www.theguardian.com/news/datablog/2016/mar/09/surge-in-rough-sleepers-outside-london>
www.housing.org.uk/BristolMayorForHomes

Commended by:



and



This Manifesto was written by a group of Christians belonging to 'Christian Action Bristol', responding to ideas put to us by 'Churches Together in Greater Bristol' and the 'Bristol and District Branch of the Evangelical Alliance'.

We welcome any comments you may have.

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The more we work together the stronger we will be.