

Report – Bridge House Estates Board

City Bridge Trust Funding Strategy - Extension of Bridging Divides, 2023-2028

To be presented on Thursday, 19th May 2022

To the Right Honourable The Lord Mayor, Aldermen and Commons of the City of London in Common Council assembled.

SUMMARY

The current policy for the application of Bridge House Estates (BHE) income under the charity's ancillary purpose is Bridging Divides 2018-2023, which was first approved by the Court of Common in July 2017, following extensive consultation and advised to the Charity Commission at the relevant time. After an interim review of Bridging Divides carried out from December 2020 to March 2021, your former City Bridge Trust (CBT) Committee approved eleven recommendations which sought to enhance the support provided to CBT grantees and develop the Bridging Divides Funding Strategy further. First among these was a recommendation to re-commit to the overarching vision and mission of Bridging Divides 2018-2023, that;

Our vision is for London to be a city where all individuals and communities can thrive, especially those experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation, by removing the challenges and barriers that they experience.

Our mission is to reduce inequality and grow stronger, more resilient and thriving communities, by using all available assets and resources, monetary and otherwise, in pursuit of a London that serves everyone,

and to recommend extending it for a further five years to 2028. Following the subsequent changes to BHE governance, your Grants Committee of the BHE Board reconsidered this proposal and agreed that it should be progressed.

At its meeting in April 2022, your BHE Board considered and agreed to endorse the recommendation, which is now put to this Honourable Court for approval. This report therefore proposes that the Court of Common Council re-commit to the overarching vision and mission of Bridging Divides 2018-2023 and agree to extend it for a further five years to 2028.

RECOMMENDATION

The Court of Common Council is asked to re-commit to the overarching vision and mission of Bridging Divides 2018-2023 and agree to extend it for a further five years to 2028.

MAIN REPORT

Background

1. The charity, Bridge House Estates (BHE), of which the City of London Corporation is the sole corporate trustee, has adopted an overarching strategy *Bridging London 2020 – 2045*. This strategy provides a framework for all BHE's activities and outlines the collective impact it seeks to have through delivering its primary and ancillary objects.
2. BHE has a primary and an ancillary purpose. In summary, the primary object of the charity is to maintain and support the five Thames bridges for which it is responsible. In 1995, the decision was taken to create an ancillary purpose for the charity in the form of CBT, to distribute income surplus to that required for the primary object to support charitable activities, in accordance with a governing Scheme brought into effect on the 20 April 1995 (by Statutory Instrument 1995/1047). The Scheme requires the Trustee to settle a policy for the application of that income and to consult such persons as the Commission may direct.
3. The current funding strategy, the policy for the application of income under the ancillary purpose, is *Bridging Divides 2018-23*, which was published in July 2017, following considerable consultation and subsequent approval by the Court of Common Council, and advised to the Charity Commission at the relevant time
4. Its vision and mission statement is as follows:

Our vision is for London to be a city where all individuals and communities can thrive, especially those experiencing disadvantage and marginalisation, by removing the challenges and barriers that they experience.

Our mission is to reduce inequality and grow stronger, more resilient and thriving communities, by using all available assets and resources, monetary and otherwise, in pursuit of a London that serves everyone.

5. In March 2021, the former City Bridge Trust Committee received a report on the *Bridging Divides* strategy and its relevance to London in light of the Covid-19 pandemic and the heightened public interest in identifying and addressing racial injustice with consultation being undertaken with BHE's stakeholders as to the current needs of the charity's beneficiaries. That Committee agreed the period from 2020-21 had been an exceptionally challenging one for London's civil society organisations and that the period had further revealed, rather than transformed, what BHE could do to ensure London becomes a city where all individuals and communities can thrive. The consultation and analysis undertaken by the Trustee identified that the overarching vision and mission of *Bridging Divides* remained relevant, but the manner of delivery of that policy should be revised to allow for more effective and impactful activities and use of funds.
6. Following an interim review of *Bridging Divides*, that Committee approved eleven recommendations that sought to enhance the support provided to CBT grantees and develop the *Bridging Divides Funding Strategy* further. The first of these recommendations, all of which were agreed by the Committee, was that BHE re-

commit to the overarching vision and mission of Bridging Divides 2018-2023 and recommend extending it for a further five years to 2028.

7. However, a subsequent recommendation was not submitted to the Court of Common Council for final approval because of the impending changes to BHE governance.
8. Following the implementation of the charity's new governance, the proposal to extend the funding strategy Bridging Divides 2018-23 was considered by the BHE Board's Grants Committee at its meeting in March 2022 and recommended to the BHE Board for endorsement in April 2022. Having considered this recommendation, your BHE Board agrees that the funding strategy should be extended to enable CBT to continue its successful work in implementing the strategy, but also agreed that the manner of delivery of that policy should be revised to allow for more effective and impactful activities and use of funds.
9. Specifically, it is intended to make the policy more transparent and relevant to the needs of beneficiaries by updating all current open funding programmes to include a more explicit equalities focus; collaborating with other funders to extend the reach and scale of the Bridging Divides strategy; supporting strategic interventions with and for communities especially hard hit by the pandemic; and investing further in the capacity and resilience of civil society organisation.

Conclusion

10. This report requests that the Court of Common Council agree to re-commit to the overarching vision and mission of Bridging Divides 2018-2023, and agree to extend it for a further five years to 2028. The Bridging Divides strategy, which is included as an appendix to this report for Members' information, has enabled CBT to consider the ways in which it can make the most positive impact on reducing inequality and creating cohesive communities, whilst also determining its role in improving the success and resilience of London's civil society, and this Honourable Court is asked to agree the recommendations of this report to enable important work on behalf of the charity to continue.

Appendices

Appendix 1 – Bridging Divides 2018-2023

All of which we submit to the judgement of this Honourable Court.

DATED this 27th day of April 2022.

SIGNED on behalf of the Bridge House Estates Board.

Deputy Dr Giles Shilson
Chair, Bridge House Estates Board