

ADEPT PRESIDENT'S AWARDS 2019 Category 2: Deploying digital innovation and technology

HIGHLY COMMENDED

Summary

Plymouth's City Change Fund is a pioneering citizen-led decision making approach to distributing funds for community infrastructure, embracing the power of crowdfunding technology.

Project

Plymouth City Council's [City Change Fund](#) is a pioneering genuinely citizen-led decision making approach for how funds for community infrastructure are distributed. Embracing crowdfunding technology, the Council pledges the 'neighbourhood portion' of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) (15%) towards projects that are led and supported by the citizens of Plymouth and are in line with the requirements of Regulation 59C of the CIL regulations (2013). Using crowdfunding ensures maximum impact by generating significant match funding, stimulating the local community and voluntary sectors, and minimising the administrative costs. The use of a digital platform has increased the visibility and success of projects that receive funding and has engaged thousands of residents in local projects.

This innovative approach saw the Council work in partnership with Crowdfunder UK to develop a Plymouth specific crowdfunding platform called '[Crowdfund Plymouth](#)'. A project that is seeking funding uploads a campaign and individuals or organisations show support for a project by pledging funds. This typically works on an 'all or nothing' model, if the fundraising target is reached the project receives the money, if it is unsuccessful no money is taken. While the Council advertises the fund, it does not decide which projects go online, anyone and everyone can upload projects.

The Council pledges money in the same way as other individuals or organisations and will pledge up to 50% (up to £20,000) of a project's target (if the project meets the criteria and is signed up to the terms and conditions). The decision to pledge is only made after the project has reached 25% of its target from other supporters, thereby demonstrating that the project has support from the community. Elected members also get consulted on the projects and are asked for their views before the Council makes a pledge. All the projects the Council have pledged on so far have gone on to reach their target amount, with many receiving overwhelming support and 'overfunding'.

The City Change Fund helps achieve sustainable development by delivering the objectives of the Plymouth Plan and the Plymouth and South West Devon Joint Local Plan. At the heart of these plans is an ambition to deliver sustainable development in line with the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals. All decisions are taken in the context of these plans and their objectives and alignment with the plans' objectives is part of the internal assessment process.

Since 2015, the Council has pledged over £250,000 on over 60 projects across the city with the Crowdfund Plymouth platform raising over £1.5 million. Campaigns have included improving local green space, such as [Collings Park Trust](#), and [Sole of Discretion](#), who created new employment opportunities by creating a dedicated supply chain for ethically caught fish.

The fund is managed internally at the Council and the partnership with Crowdfunder UK ensures that the administrative burden is significantly reduced compared to traditional funding methods. The digital platform and technical support from Crowdfunder UK keeps costs down and allows us to allocate more money to projects and less on internal administration.