



REPORT TITLE: Gloucestershire Libraries National Portfolio Organisation

Dates between which decision will be taken	Earliest date: 10 th February 2023 Latest date: 31 st March 2023
Cabinet Member	Cllr Dave Norman, MBE - Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries
Key Decision	Yes
Purpose of Report	To seek Cabinet Member approval to: 1) Accept Arts Council England funding of £750,000 over a 3-year term, commencing 1 st April 2023; and 2) To agree that an independent oversight board be set up to oversee the appropriate use of funding.
Recommendations	1) That the Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries delegates authority to the Head of Libraries & Registration, to enter into an agreement with Arts Council England to become a National Portfolio Organisation from 1 st April 2023 to 31 st March 2026. 2) That the Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries delegates authority to the Head of Libraries & Registration, to establish a board to provide independent oversight of the Council's funding agreement and the Council's quarterly reporting to Arts Council England.
Reasons for Recommendations	To secure additional revenue income to support the delivery of the cultural and creative elements of the new Library Strategy and to help meet the ambitions outlined in Arts Council England's 'Let's Create' Strategy. https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/lets-create/strategy-2020-2030
Resource Implications	Grant funding of £250,000 per year over a 3-year period from 1 st April 2023.
Background Documents	Arts Council England investment programme https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/investment23
Statutory Authority	Public Libraries & Museums Act 1964

Divisional Councillor(s)	All
Officer	Any representations should be sent to: Name: Jane Everiss Tel. no: 01452 425027 Email: jane.everiss@gloucestershire.gov.uk By 5pm on 9th February 2023
Timeline	Applications open - January 2022 Bid submitted – 13 th May 2022 Successful bid confirmed – 4 th November 2022 Implementation – 1 st April 2023

Background

1. The Arts Council National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) scheme works on investing in existing cultural bodies and collectives with a three-year funding programme.
2. As part of the Arts Council's ten-year strategy (which commences in 2023), libraries and museums throughout the UK were actively encouraged to apply for NPO status to boost and develop the role they play as community spaces.
3. Their aim is to invest in the value of creativity provided in every corner of local communities, building on success, and encouraging ambition. As part of their next round of applications, the Arts Council had committed to grow the investment within libraries, noting that libraries play a key role in their communities and wanting to see them used more to connect the public with other cultural and artistic activities.
4. Applications opened in January 2022 with the outcome of those applications announced in November. 1,700 applications were submitted with Gloucestershire libraries being one of only 990 successful applications.

Aims and Objectives

5. Over the three-year period Gloucestershire Libraries aims to build an ambitious plan engaging with partners and wider audiences. There will be specific emphasis on activities and outcomes in Gloucester City and Forest of Dean as priority places for Arts Council England, maximising the reach through the six libraries based in Gloucester (Gloucester City, Longlevens, Quedgeley, Hucclecote, Matson and Tuffley) and the four libraries in Forest of Dean (Coleford, Lydney, Cinderford and Newent). During the period of funding, Gloucestershire will have a new flagship library in the City of Gloucester as part of a new building shared with the University of Gloucestershire, who will form an essential partner in the delivery of the activity plan.
6. At the heart of planning activities and opportunities for the future vision of Gloucestershire Libraries we have developed three themes: '**Ageing with Creativity**', '**Space to Engage**' and '**Gloucestershire Family Focus**'. Alongside these three key aims, Gloucestershire Libraries will maintain a constant programme of audience development activity, engaging directly with communities and using a newly formed Audience and Community Development Team with a specific remit of working with BAME groups, younger people, NEETs (not in education, employment, or training), students, early years children and older people.

This team will engage with these groups to make library spaces into something relevant for them. This will also involve countywide, and localised partners using this team as a resource to seek future funding streams to keep the programme of work continuous and create a legacy.

In order to become a National Portfolio Organisation, Arts Council England require the setup of an advisory board which is independent to the County Council's governance processes. The Board will provide a consultative forum to the Council about its approach to cultural provision and the contributions the service makes to the Arts Council's 'Let's Create' Strategy outcomes, including the requirement to report on

progress to Arts Council England on a quarterly basis. Whilst the Board will not have specific decision-making powers or be accountable for formulating service strategy, it will provide independent assurance to Arts Council England on the work of Gloucestershire Libraries as an NPO.

7. The advisory board will consist of 12 individuals with a diversity of perspective and expertise. 9 people, independent of the County Council will make up the majority of the advisory board. 2 members of library staff and the Cabinet Member for Libraries will hold ex-officio (non-voting) seats.

Options

8. Not to commit to becoming a National Portfolio Organisation (i.e. to enable Gloucestershire Libraries to provide more opportunities for residents and visitors to take part and engage in arts and cultural activities) – this option is discounted due to the positive benefits and opportunities being an NPO will bring to both the service and the communities in Gloucestershire. The funding provides additional staffing resource to be able to deliver to people who may not readily engage with arts and culture.
9. To enter into a three-year agreement with Arts Council England to become a National Portfolio Organisation. This will bring £250,000 funding per year to deliver the activities and outcomes outlined above. The activity will be offered throughout the county and specifically within the Gloucester and Forest of Dean locations as two of the Arts Council England's priority areas.

Risks

10. Capacity to deliver – this could be flagged as a risk if we are unable to recruit to the new roles which are being created in order to deliver our outcomes. We believe the risk is low level due to the interest and engagement we have already received through partner organisations.
11. Ability to deliver outcomes – There is a risk that the activity plan submitted to Arts Council England is not delivered. This is a low risk as Arts Council England recognises that delivery may need to be adapted due to the ongoing cost of living crisis.
12. Inability to attract board members – There is a risk that we are unable to attract voluntary board members to provide the oversight and assurance to Arts Council England. We have already been in talks with potential partners to identify people who may wish to play a part in our board membership.

Financial implications

13. Arts Council funding of £750,000 would be received over a 3-year period from 1st April 2023. Delivery of the activities would be achieved within this funding.

Climate change implications

14. The activity being delivered through the NPO recognises the importance of climate change and sustainability and includes engaging communities in activities, events and conversations that address the climate change crisis to promote and affect change.
15. Additionally, we will deliver initiatives that encourage and promote swaps, re-use and repair. We will also partner with local community groups to enhance & expand the use of our outdoor spaces – creating community gardens to support healthy living.

Equality implications

Has an Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) been completed? Yes

Cabinet Members should read and consider the Equalities Impact Assessment in order to satisfy themselves as decision makers that due regard has been given.

Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) implications

16. The Library Management System which manages library customers' use holds personal information. The current system has been in place since April 2020 and a DPIA is being undertaken to ensure any risk to library user's personal data is documented and minimised.

Social value implications

17. Libraries offer many social value benefits. The service actively encourages volunteers, work experience and DofE experience. These volunteers assist with providing services ranging from home delivery to those who are housebound to supporting people to use ICT and access the internet. People will be encouraged to volunteer their time and skills as part of the library advisory board.
18. Young people can gain confidence and some work experience by volunteering alongside experienced staff, whilst with older people volunteering can reduce social isolation. As part of the NPO, there will be a paid opportunities for young people to enable them to influence the provision of library services and gain valuable skills and experience working in a library setting.
19. Free activities offered by libraries through the NPO will be aimed at reducing social isolation, supporting carers of people with dementia and activities aimed at supporting maternal mental health and children's literacy and development. Libraries offer Books on Prescription which are prescribed by GPs to help with medical and mental health issues.
20. The library innovation labs provide dedicated support to build skills and confidence. This extends to businesses supporting with volunteers to help give back to the community and workshops specifically aimed at communities who might not otherwise have access to the specialist technical kit. These workshops help spark young people's interest in STEM (science, technology, engineering & mathematics), supports with

training, skills and confidence in digital technology and supports economic recovery for start-ups and small businesses.

Officer recommendations

21. That the Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries delegates authority to the Head of Libraries & Registration, to enter into an agreement with Arts Council England to become a National Portfolio Organisation from 1st April 2023 to 31st March 2026.
22. That the Cabinet Member for Fire, Community Safety and Libraries delegates authority to the Head of Libraries & Registration, to establish a board to provide independent oversight of the Council's funding agreement and the Council's quarterly reporting to Arts Council England.

Performance management/follow-up

23. As part of the agreement with Arts Council England the independent board will meet on a quarterly basis with the Head of Libraries and Registration to monitor the outcomes and activities. There will be a requirement to report on a quarterly basis to Arts Council England.