

Portfolio Holder Decision

Libraries NPO bid

Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation
Date of decision	20 May 2022
	Signed

1. Decision taken

1.1 The Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation is asked to give permission for Warwickshire Libraries to submit an application to Arts Council England for Warwickshire Libraries to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO). If successful, Warwickshire Libraries will receive funding of up to £630K over 3 years to support cultural and creative programming, delivery and staffing.

2. Reasons for decisions

- 2.1 NPO status would be of significant local and national benefit for Warwickshire Libraries. NPO's are leaders in their areas with a responsibility to support the delivery of ACE's 10-year strategy '*Let's Create*'. The funding would enable the service to plan for the longer term, to develop a high-quality cultural offer for the people of Warwickshire, to continue to build audiences, working in our most deprived communities and to make the service offer as accessible to as many people as possible.
- 2.2 The funding would enable the service to target Council priority groups and support the place making agenda and key actions in The Council Plan more effectively.
- 2.3 All libraries will see the benefit over the investment period, but as an Arts Council priority [place](#) there will be a particular emphasis on Nuneaton, Bedworth and North Warwickshire libraries. This area meets the criteria for assistance as part of the Government's Levelling Up agenda.
- 2.4 The NPO programme will also aim to reach out to rural communities, which have not benefitted from previous grant rounds, despite having significant pockets of deprivation.

3. Background information

3.1 The Arts Council England (ACE) are welcoming applications from organisations to apply to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) to deliver their [Let's Create strategy 2023-2026](#).

3.2 Public libraries are included as organisations that can apply for this round of funding; neighbouring authorities are also applying, therefore it will be quite a competitive round. Should we be successful we will join library authorities such as St Helens, Suffolk, Nottinghamshire, Devon, and Cambridgeshire which were awarded funding in 2018.

3.3 If successful Arts Council England have several expectations, namely that all NPOs will create work for the public that will deliver at least one of the three *Let's Create* outcomes:

- Creative People – everyone can develop and express creatively throughout their life.
- Cultural Communities – Villages, towns and cities thrive through a collaborative approach to culture.
- A Creative & Cultural Country – England's cultural sector is innovative, collaborative and international.

In addition, all NPOs must be committed to progress against all of ACE's Investment Principles, namely:

- Inclusivity and Relevance
- Environmental Responsibility
- Dynamism
- Ambition and Quality

3.5 These will be embedded in our funding agreement and progress monitored and reported on. This includes setting up an advisory Library board, independent of the executive (the executive will consist of the 2 Library Delivery Leads and Manager, Universal Services), who has responsibility for effective delivery of the NPO programme. This would include artists, local community, and local members. This advisory board will have the following minimum responsibilities and authority:

- To have - in either direct or delegated form - responsibility for oversight of the NPO funding agreement.
- To meet regularly (at least four times a year) with the Library executive team in order to review progress on the NPO funding programme.
- To receive and review regular reports on progress against the funding agreement and ensure that these reports are forwarded to the Arts Council on a timely basis.
- To be able to communicate directly with the Arts Council, independent of the executive if required.
- Supporting the executive team to embed the Investment Principles in the organisation will be an important responsibility of the group too.

- A nominated officer will need to act as the key responsible officer for the NPO function and would act as secretary to the Library NPO board. This would be the Service Manager for Universal Services.

3.6 Timescales

- February/March 2022 - Senior library staff attended application and guidance briefings.
- March 2022- Senior library staff attended a compulsory introductory conversation with the ACE team
- Mid May 2022 - Submit Application ACE online portal
- October 2022 - Funding decisions to be shared with applicants - October 2022

3.6 Our overarching aim and ambition is to grow and develop a high-quality cultural offer for the people of Warwickshire that delivers in depth against our organisational mission and objectives alongside those identified in *Let's Create* and priorities in our [Council Plan](#) with our existing audiences and building on providing a solid base from which to grow and diversify our audience.

Our three-year NPO delivery plan aims to:

- promote libraries as places for people to access great art and culture within their communities.
- create new and exciting opportunities for the people of Warwickshire to enjoy and participate in culture.
- seek new opportunities to work with creative individuals and organisations to explore, develop and deliver new work through our programme.
- grow and develop the creative and practical skills of our staff embedding new opportunities for them to think and approach cultural programming differently and to grow their skills working with artists and creatives.
- collaborate and share learning with other local NPOs and library NPOs nationally.
- develop and adopt lessons learned from the pandemic into our programming and work.
- deliver work which is inclusive, accessible and representative of Warwickshire's people and communities.

3.7 A proportion of the funding would be used to a deliver bespoke high-quality programme of CPD, training, coaching, mentoring and support for staff that will build and develop their confidence and skills to become cultural facilitators, delivering community engagement and audience-facing activities that will be assessed in terms of impact on staff skills, audience reach. Staff will have the opportunity to take up training opportunities which will create a legacy of sustainable offers beyond the funding period.

3.8 NPO investment would assist Warwickshire Library and Information Service in playing an important role in helping deliver the Government's 'levelling up' agenda.

3.9 NPO investment would enable Warwickshire Library and Information Service to grow

it's sector profile and to work collaboratively with other NPOs locally and nationally, and be seen as a leader in arts and cultural activities and delivery.

3.10 The NPO will also support the aims of Warwickshire Heritage and Culture Strategy and place making strategy. It will also support the Community Powered approach by co-producing activities with local people.

4. Financial implications

4.1 The proposal is to submit an application to ACE for up to £210,000 p.a. for 3 years (2023-2026). If granted the funding will support both programming and delivery, including staffing costs.

4.2 The County Council is not required to provide match funding but will need to keep ringfenced records of expenditure and income for the NPO and regular reporting to ACE will be required.

5. Environmental implications

5.1 The application requires evidence of our 3-year ambition for environmental responsibility, and how we will meet ACE's own investment principles of environmental responsibility including skills development, planning and tools and monitoring.

5.2 If the application is successful, we will be required to report on the environment responsibility investment principle including annual priorities across the investment period.

5.3 The Council Plan will be reference point for our work and ways in which we can reduce impact across libraries during the 2023-26 investment period.

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Strategic Director	Strategic Director for Resources
Portfolio Holder	Portfolio Holder for Customer & Transformation

Urgent matter?	No
Confidential or exempt?	No
Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework?	No

List of background papers

n/a

Members and officers consulted and informed

Portfolio Holder – Councillor Andy Jenns

Corporate Board – Rob Powell

Legal – Ian Marriott

Finance – Virginia Rennie

Equality – Keira Rounsley

Democratic Services – Isabelle Moorhouse

Councillors – Members of the Fire & Resources OSC

Local Member(s): n/a