

**BOROUGH OF POOLE
CABINET**

31st October 2017

**ACCEPTANCE OF ARTS COUNCIL NATIONAL PORTFOLIO ORGANISATION
FUNDING FOR POOLE MUSEUMS 2018-22**

REPORT OF THE HEAD OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

- 1.1** To seek approval for the Museum Service, as lead body of the Wessex Museums Partnership, to accept grant funding from Arts Council England of £1.278m for the period 2018-22, following the admission of the partnership to the Arts Council's National Portfolio (NPO) of regularly funded organisations.

2 RECOMMENDATION

That Cabinet recommends to Council:

- 2.1** That as lead partner of the Wessex Museums Partnership, Poole Museum Service accept an Arts Council England grant of £1.278m as an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) 2018-22.
- 2.2** That the Head of Culture and Community in consultation with the Monitoring Officer and Chief Finance Officer be authorised to enter into a grant funding agreement with Arts Council England.
- 2.3** That, if it becomes appropriate during the course of the NPO programme, the Head of Culture and Community may agree with the Arts Council to novate the grant to the Wessex Museums Trust (WMT).

3 BACKGROUND

- 3.1** In December 2016 Council agreed that, as lead partner of the Wessex Museums Partnership, Poole Museum Service should apply to become an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation and receive revenue grant funding on behalf of the partnership for 2018-22. In June 2017 it was announced that the application was successful, with a award to the partnership of £1.278m (the full amount requested) for the four year programme. Because the grant is over £1m, Financial Regulations require that its acceptance is agreed by Council, so Cabinet is now asked to recommend acceptance.
- 3.2** The grant will fund a broad range of partnership and Poole Museum Service core activity, including community engagement, fundraising, collections care and development, marketing and digital engagement, at no cost to the Council. For example, there will be £18,500 funding of the Poole Museum's

major exhibition in 2018, which should generate significant income for the service. The grant and NPO status will also support plans to reduce dependence on Council funding through an access and resilience capital project.

- 3.3** Visit England recently announced that Poole Museum is the most popular free attraction in Dorset (and the most popular museum), and the 5th most popular free attraction in the South West. The selection of the Museum Service as an NPO, within a larger NPO partnership, is an accolade for its success in recent years, as well as for the success of the partnership. The Arts Council has chosen five key arts and heritage hubs for Bournemouth and Poole: BSO, Lighthouse, Pavilion Dance, Poole Museums and the Arts by the Sea festival.
- 3.4** The other partner museums are Dorset County Museum, The Salisbury Museum and Wiltshire Museum, all independent trusts. The partnership received funding from the Arts Council's Museum Resilience Fund in 2015-17 and is described by it as a national exemplar of consortium working.
- 3.5** In January 2017 the partnership formalised as WMT, a registered charitable incorporated organisation, enabling it to fundraise, to employ staff and to further develop long-term partnership activity. During the course of the NPO programme responsibility for grant and programme management may be novated to WMT from the Borough of Poole. This will only happen if is beneficial to all parties and can be demonstrated that WMT will manage the grant and programme cost-effectively.

4 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1** The grant will benefit the Borough of Poole by further improving the income, resilience, programming and fundraising ability of the Museum Service. Improved marketing and public programming will increase secondary income through the Museum's donations and retail activity, and have economic impact in Poole through tourism.
- 4.2** Council Museum and Finance officers, along with Wessex Museum Partnership colleagues, met with Arts Council England on in July 2017 to discuss financial and other implications of becoming an NPO. Financial Regulations will be complied with in all matters related to the NPO programme. The grant will be the subject of a funding agreement, partnership agreement and business plan which will mitigate against financial risks.
- 4.3** Acceptance of the NPO grant does not impose any conditions on future funding decisions by the Council with regard to the Museum Service. There is no requirement for match funding of the Arts Council grant. Proposed income targets for programme activity will be managed to mitigate any risks to the success of activities.
- 4.4** The NPO grant will be entirely funded from Government grant in aid, with no National Lottery funding. There will not, therefore, be any restrictions on the Council applying for capital or lottery funding from the Arts Council. Although

as an NPO the Museum Service will not be able to apply to the Arts Council's Grants for the Arts and Culture programme, it will have access to Arts Council capital funding for NPOs, just as Lighthouse did for its 2016/17 refurbishment,.

- 4.5** If for any reason the Borough of Poole withdraws from the NPO funding agreement the Arts Council may novate it to another partner. The partnership agreement will stipulate that in the event of any overspends or grant shortfalls these will be met by the respective partner or pro rata for partnership activities.

5 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1** No adverse legal implications are foreseen. Legal Services will review and advise on the terms of the NPO partnership agreement.
- 5.2** In November 2016 the Head of Legal, Democratic and Strategy agreed that the Head of Culture and Community had authority to establish the WMT and nominate trustees on behalf of Poole. The trustees of WMT are the Head of Culture and Community Learning, the Museum and Arts Manager, the directors of the other three partner museums and an independent chair.

6 STAFFING IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1** Poole Museum Service staff will lead and support the NPO programme, which will be administered by a Project Manager employed by Poole, with the support of Culture and Community Business Support and Financial Services.
- 6.2** The post of Project Manager will be funded by the Arts Council throughout the NPO 2018-22 programme.
- 6.3** Within the NPO programme there will be additional recruitments across the partner museums funded by the Arts Council. These will either be temporary contracts or independent contractors, to mitigate against redundancy liabilities.

7 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1** The proposed programming will enable more diverse audiences to engage with and access the Museum Service and partnership and their activities.

HEAD OF CULTURE AND COMMUNITY

Contact Officer: Michael Spender, Museum and Arts Manager
m.spender@poole.gov.uk / 01202 262609