

OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY BOARD



Report subject	Arts and Culture Funding
Meeting date	12 May 2025
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	This provides information on the Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations which BCP Council supports. The report provides information on their funding, objectives and details the important link between culture, health and wellbeing in line with the corporate strategy.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: a. Overview and scrutiny note the information contained within the report.
Reason for recommendations	This report is for information

Portfolio Holder(s):	Councillor Andy Martin – Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture
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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information

Background

1. The Cultural Development Team sits within the Commercial Operations Directorate under Leisure & Events. This team manage the Arts by the Sea Festival, work with cultural partners and communities delivering cultural projects and are delivering part of the levelling up funded work, installing 11 art installations across coastal locations.
2. BCP Council contribute to the funding of 7 Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisations (NPO's). Two of these are BCP Council led, the Arts by the Sea Festival and Poole Museum. The remaining 5 NPO's sit outside of the council and are run by external organisations.
3. The management of the external NPO's relationship recently moved across to the Commercial Operations Directorate in order to join up the cultural approach moving forward.
4. NPO's are recognised and funded by Arts Council England as leaders in the arts and cultural sector. There are currently 985 NPO's receiving committed funding across the country.
5. For the Arts Council to invest NPO's need to demonstrate they are engaging communities, collaborating with others and producing high quality work that engages people along with meeting their Arts Council Investment Principles.
6. In 23/24 Arts Council England invested £5.3 million into the BCP area, representing 9% of their total South-West Budget.
7. The current NPO funding period runs from April 2023 – March 2028.

National Portfolio Organisations (NPO's) with council funding

8. The table below shows the breakdown of the current position of funding for NPO's alongside the organisations vision and objectives.

Table 1 – External NPO organisations with council funding

NPO organisation	BCP Council annual grant	Arts Council funding	NPO Vision & objectives
Lighthouse Poole (Poole Arts Trust)	£387,900	£354,000	<p>Vision - A nationally significant and regionally important multi-arts venue, that is one of the cultural gems of Dorset, at the heart of our community and locally loved. A dynamic, vibrant place where people feel inspired, entertained, welcomed, and where artists and performers feel supported and empowered to do their best work.</p> <p>Mission To provide the community of Poole and the wider region with a vibrant, diverse and relevant cultural programme of live performances, film, engagement and participation, that entertains, moves, surprises, and challenges our audiences through an ever-changing programme, which stretches, and challenges our audiences through an ever-changing programme, which stretches from the popular and familiar to the eclectic and innovative, reflecting and respecting the breadth of their interests and their trust in us.</p>
Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra	£246,348	£2,554,790	<p>Mission – BSO exists to bring music into people’s lives to make a Happier, Healthier and Fairer Society</p> <p>Vision - The BSO’s vision is to be the model of a 21st century orchestra, enhancing lives through the power of music</p> <p>Objectives Delivering a high-quality, diverse and distinctive programme of work Challenging barriers to the access of high-quality music Demonstrative the empowering impact of music on people’s lives Celebrating high-quality music and talent Nurturing lifelong relationships with stakeholders through strong and resilient collaboration</p>

Pavilion Dance Southwest	£102,600	£386,216	<p>Vision - A world in which dance is celebrated as an integral part of life.</p> <p>Mission - Transforming communities through dance by opening doors, deepening connections and embracing diversity</p> <p>Objectives Deepen our impact locally, delivering empowering dance experiences for people across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Strengthen our national sector leadership role through collaboration and partnership Nurture an inclusive, sustainable and resilient organisation Transform our regional role to focus on supporting artists and the development of dance in the South West</p>
Hampshire Cultural Trust (Red House Museum, Christchurch)	£90,000	£500,000	<p>Vision - To create inspirational cultural experiences in Hampshire that enrich and transform lives.</p> <p>Objectives To provide high-quality programmes and venues that engage diverse audiences and inspire local pride To improve wellbeing, health, and happiness through cultural experiences To deliver a sustainable future for culture in Hampshire, contributing to the local economy and building stronger communities To create fulfilling employment and volunteering opportunities through culture</p>
Activate Performing Arts (Inside Out Dorset Festival)	£11,700	£251,422	<p>Vision - Extraordinary moments connect and uplift us all: we create opportunities for everyone through the performing arts.</p> <p>Objectives Extraordinary events in extraordinary places Community engagement programme Co-programming pilot Schools engagement programme Children and young peoples' engagement programme Talent development programme Touring and co-presenting programme Strategic engagement programme International partnerships</p>

9. Annual partnership agreements are put in place each year with the NPO's laying out the organisations' vision and objectives. The agreements also set out the activities that the NPO's will deliver and provide key metrics and data analytics for performance and delivery. Each activity aligns with the aims and objectives of BCP Council Corporate and Cultural Strategies.
10. The work that the NPO's carry out align closely with the Council's Corporate Strategy including
 - Our Place and Environment – vibrant places where people and nature flourish with a thriving economy in a healthy natural environment.
 - Our People and Communities – everyone leads a fulfilled life maximising opportunity for all.
11. Partnership meetings take place throughout the funding period. Introduction meetings are underway now the partnerships have moved to Commercial Operations. Quarterly reviews will be held thereafter to monitor progress against objectives.
12. Regular meetings also take place with the Portfolio Holder for Customer, Communications and Culture and individual NPO's, jointly with the Arts Council England and through the Cultural Compact.
13. Cultural activity creates a range of positive benefits to residents' lives including personal fulfilment, community cohesion, employment opportunities, skills development, revitalised high streets, economic benefit and positive mental health and wellbeing.
14. The health and wellbeing links to cultural activities is explored further in the public health implications section of this paper.
15. The council's vision in the Cultural Strategy 2023-2032 focusses on three key development goals:
 - Talent - Attracting, developing and retaining diverse talent, making BCP a place for people to build high quality creative careers or develop creative skills. Embracing creative education, developing a skilled workforce, championing diverse cultural expression and enabling people of all backgrounds to actively participate in the cultural life of the region.
 - Infrastructure - Developing networks and spaces, both physical and digital, to experiment, make, share and present accessible creative work. Building cultural capacity by using the excellence of existing hubs, venues and organisations, developing key new ones and boosting the region as a place that produces and hosts great art and culture of international significance.
 - Place - Strengthening connections between communities and the places in which we live, work, learn and play, breaking down barriers to creation and participation. Embedding culture in planning and place-making with a focus on nurturing distinctive neighbourhoods, dynamic town centres, accessible and imaginative public spaces, urban mobility and an attention to social cohesion, health and wellbeing and environmental sustainability

16. The work of the NPO's aligns with the development goals in the Cultural Strategy, delivering activity with a focus on one or more ambition to support talent development, engage communities, maximise the effective use of the conurbation's venues, create vibrant town centres, provide accessible cultural opportunities for people of all demographics, remove barriers to engagement and positively impact the health and wellbeing of BCP residents.
17. Arts Council England's vision of 'Lets Create' also closely align with those articulated in both the council's Cultural and Corporate strategies.
18. Arts Council England will only support funding in areas where there is political support for culture. BCP Council have consistently demonstrated this with continued investment in NPO's in the area and this has been supported by significant investment in culture by Arts Council England, as well as by other funders and donors.
19. Due to the support from BCP Council, Arts Council England currently provide over £4 million of annual funding to the NPO's across Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole.
20. Arts Council England have recently announced they are pausing the launch of their next National Portfolio Investment Programme which was due to be launched in April and are recommending to Government that their current National Portfolio extends to 31 March 2028, instead of the anticipated end date of March 2027.
21. This is due to the Government's imminent spending review, the Government's independent review of the Arts Council and the Devolution White Paper.
22. The risks of any future reduction in funding are explored within the risk assessment section of the paper.
23. The Cultural Compact works to support the development of arts, heritage, and creative industries, ensuring that culture plays a central role in shaping the conurbation's future success and the wellbeing of all its residents. Set up in 2020 with funding from Arts Council England and BCP Council, the Cultural Compact works to deliver the region's aspiration for the cultural and creative sector. By acting as a broker, connector and champion for BCP's creative communities, the Cultural Compact aims to enable a step-change in the capacity of Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole's creative sector over the next two years, positioning themselves to bid for significant cross-conurbation funding such as the Arts Council's Place Partnership Fund.
24. The Cultural Compact task group is made up of representatives from Pavilion Dance, Lighthouse, BSO, Activate, Arts University Bournemouth, Bournemouth University, Bournemouth Town Centre BID and BCP Council. Each has an area to lead on & delivery targets to meet over next 2 years. By the culmination of the plan in early 2027, the Cultural Compact will have run a series of Creative Health Facilitated Conversations, set up and run regular cultural network gatherings around specific topics of interest, drafted strategic documents in dialogue with BCP Council, secured funding for a Bournemouth Town Centre pilot project, run a series of workshops for the creative sector by access & inclusion and environmental sustainability experts, created and delivered an Economic Impact Report, connected education settings and cultural networks, and connected heritage assets to tourism and visitor organisations and networks.

Impact of NPO's work across BCP

25. The impact of the NPO's work across BCP was measured in 2019/20 which showed 633,000 attendees across indoor and outdoor events, engaging over 90,000 children and providing employment for 180 permanent staff, 57 casual staff and 592 freelancers.
26. The external NPO's with council funding invest in community engagement and talent development and some of these initiatives are detailed below in points 27 – 31.
27. Lighthouse
 - hosted 80 live performances in 24/25 reaching 57,000 people
 - hosts a programme of pre and post-show talks, masterclasses, workshops connected to received productions.
 - hosts creative sessions for young people as part of the Creative Engagement Programme with partner schools
 - audio described, captioned and dementia friendly performances and autism friendly performances of pantomime
28. Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra
 - host of the internationally acclaimed disabled-led ensemble BSO Resound
 - hosts dementia friendly events and bring live music into care homes (25 care home events 24/25)
 - undertakes a schools' participation programme with 37 BCP schools
 - delivered 77 participant events with over 10,000 attendees in 24/25
29. Pavilion Dance South-West
 - host regular parkinsons and dementia dance classes
 - work with Public Health to deliver a range of workshops and sessions for children and young people based on physical and mental health outcomes
 - mentor an annual cohort of young choreographers
 - partners with the AUB dance degree
30. Hampshire Cultural Trust
 - host the Stepping Stones programme which works in partnership with Hampshire Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service to support young people's mental health
 - hosts the Brighter Futures programme working with wellbeing centres, care providers and social prescribing networks to provide workshops and courses.
31. Activate
 - host The Remix – an inclusive youth performance company for disabled and non-disabled 12-17 year olds
 - host Dorset Youth Dance – weekly classes for young people of all abilities

Summary of financial implications

32. The council funding for the NPO's is detailed in the council's medium term financial plan (MTFP) which was agreed at full council in February 2025.
33. The total annual council funding for external NPO's is £838,548.
34. The council funding for the Arts by the Sea Festival NPO has been removed from the budget from 26/27 through the budget setting process and savings identified.

Summary of legal implications

35. There are no legal implications directly arising from this report.
36. Funding agreements between the Council and NPOs outline key activities and targets, managed through partnerships to align with the Council's Corporate Strategy.

Summary of human resources implications

37. Staff resource is in place to support the partnership working for the NPO's.

Summary of sustainability impact

38. The NPO's work within their individual organisations on the sustainability impact for their activities.
39. An example of this is the Lighthouse's work set out specific plans that will push the Lighthouse towards a net zero by 2030 as detailed in their annual impact report.

Summary of public health implications

40. It is widely recognised and researched that culture promotes health and wellbeing known as 'creative health'. This is supported through the Arts Council England's Lets Create Strategy 2020-2030 and the social prescribing benefits from culture. Further work in this field is ongoing with the NHS, Arts Council England, Cultural, Health and Wellbeing Alliance and All Party Parliamentary Group for Arts. Creative Health can contribute to the prevention of ill-health, promotion of healthy behaviours, management of long-term conditions, and treatment and recovery across the life course.
41. Cultural organisations are well placed to secure Public Health funding for their activities which deliver on health and wellbeing benefits.
42. As an example, Pavilion Dance South West have obtained a grant from Public Health for £11,400 to support their dance programmes for children and young people to boost physical activity and emotional health and wellbeing. This will be delivered through weekly creative dance classes for 3 age groups between 0-13 years, a youth dance company for 14-19 years, after school dance and counselling sessions in partnership with Dorset MIND, weekly street dance classes in West Howe and a school's programme delivered via 7 formal partnerships with schools across BCP and one-off projects in at least 4 more. This programme contributes to the Public Health Joint Forward Plan Pillar Outcomes 1 (improve the lives of 100,000 people impacted by poor mental health) and 2 (prevent 55,000 children from becoming overweight by 2040).

Summary of equality implications

43. An EIA has not been completed for this report as there is no change to the funding or service provided.

Summary of risk assessment

Risks	Level	Mitigations
Devolution	Medium	
Financial - Government review on spending resulting in a change in available Arts Council funding	Medium	Ongoing partnership working with cultural partners and Arts Council England
Reputational – Reduction in Council funding	Medium	Continued support and partnership work with NPO's
Reputational – NPO's not delivering on objectives	Low	Funding agreements put in place each year with regular partnership meetings.
Reputational – No or limited cultural provision in our communities and town centres will limit their future growth	Medium	Continued work with NPO organisations

Background papers

[Bournemouth-Christchurch-and-Poole-Cultural-Strategy](#)