

POLICY AND FINANCE COMMITTEE

31 MARCH 2022

DEVELOPMENT OF RESOURCE IN 2022/2023 – HERITAGE AND CULTURE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek approval for additional resources in the Heritage & Culture Business Unit, to deliver aspirations within the Community Plan and exploit opportunities that will exist in the financial year 2022/23 and beyond.
- 1.2 The same report will be considered by the Economic Development Committee at their meeting to be held on 23 March 2022.

2.0 Background Information

- 2.1 In January 2022, Business Managers presented their business plans for the forthcoming financial year, with a view to delivering the aspirations and objectives set out within the Community Plan. In February 2022, SLT also met with the Chairs and Vice Chairs of the Council's Committees, to take stock of the ruling group's manifesto commitments, assess what had been delivered to date and what still needed to be delivered by the end of the current Council.
- 2.2 As would also be expected over the life of a four year Council, funding opportunities have also continued to present themselves as the country seeks to recover from the global pandemic which has had profound impacts over aspects of the economy, our finances and communities.
- 2.3 Having considered all of the above, this paper sets out some of the activities still to be delivered, the opportunities that have arisen and proposes the allocation of resources that would enable the Heritage & Culture Business Unit to respond to these on behalf of the Council.

3.0 Proposals

- 3.1 The Heritage & Culture sector has been one of the sectors of the economy hit hardest by the pandemic. Following a Government announcement in March 2020, The Palace Theatre, National Civil War Centre – Newark Museum and the Castle, closed to members of the public, with the vast majority of employees within the business unit being placed on furlough.
- 3.2 Over the next two years, the service has responded and re-invented itself to changes in government guidance and even repurposing the theatre in the height of the pandemic to a food hub in what should have been a celebratory centenary year.
- 3.3 Through prudent use of the furlough scheme and successfully applying for various government funding pots to continue to engage with customers in an outdoor or online environment, the business unit achieved budget in 2020/21, then devised a new reduced operating model to navigate the challenging path to recovery which will again lead to the achievement of budget at the end of 21/22.

- 3.4 However, with the current easing of government restrictions, there is a need to regain confidence amongst audiences and visitors and return numbers to pre-pandemic levels. At the same time, there is also huge ambition for the service and Newark as evidenced by the £4.6-million Castle Gatehouse project, with £2.6-million of Towns Fund monies and, similarly, by the £1.6-million bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund (NLHF) to address some of the project shortfall and to re-imagine how the Castle grounds can be used in a post pandemic environment to bring residents and visitors into contact with the town's heritage and visitor offer.
- 3.5 With an eye to the re-purposing and re-imagining of Newark through the Towns Fund, the business unit is also heavily involved in the High Streets Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium Programme. This is essentially a partnership of local voluntary sector and charity groups, which is led by Inspire with substantial support from the Council. The aspiration behind this scheme is to deliver activity in the town, link key heritage spaces and sites and change how people experience Newark Town Centre.
- 3.6 In practice, however, as organisations have responded to the challenges of the pandemic, there have been challenges in both capacity building within the consortium and in resourcing activity and much of the delivery on the ground has been done by the Council through activities such as Fun Palaces. Exciting plans are being developed to grow this programme in 2022 and beyond and the Heritage & Culture business unit will be heavily involved in creating bids for new monies and delivering events and activities.
- 3.7 Longer-term, much of this work will be key as a forerunner to the wider and bigger events and experience programme being envisaged under the Cultural Heart of Newark Scheme being developed as a distinct Town's Fund project.
- 3.8 Additionally, there is also the potential for the Council's Heritage & Culture offer to become a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) through Arts Council England, which, if successful, could bring an estimated £300,000 per annum of new funding over the next three years as well as continuing to elevate the offer on a national footing. Applications to become an NPO must consider in detail the Arts Council's ten year strategy, its governance requirements and its key investment principles and outcomes. Newark & Sherwood has been placed on the Levelling Up for Culture priority places list and the Arts Council is committing to increasing funding in these areas where possible. The business unit has already identified how its business plan aligns to these aspirations and it is vital that it can capitalise on this opportunity by applying in this current funding round, which covers 2023-26. The application must be submitted by mid-May and is the subject of the Arts Council report also on this agenda.
- 3.9 All of the above – the need to recover, to re-think and re-purpose and re-develop the heritage & cultural offer, as well as mitigate funding risks in the medium term – is placing significant pressures on the Heritage & Culture Business Unit, which post-austerity, has already seen major efficiencies being delivered in its operating subsidy. To illustrate that point, under the Business Manager, the next highest graded officer is on an NS11, with the next operational tier below on an NS8. Management capacity to deliver all of the above is therefore limited.

- 3.10 To deliver the National Portfolio Organisation bid, the Castle Gatehouse and the Heritage Action Zone Cultural Consortium Programme, there is a need to backfill some operational activity to free up some of the management that does exist within the Business Unit to deliver these projects.
- 3.11 This would see the Learning & Participation Officer (NS6, £28k) post being backfilled by an officer whose one-year funded post by the Art Fund comes to an end at the end of March. Similarly, as the draw on the current curatorial staff (1.5FTE) increases through the NLHF and Gatehouse project, there is a need to back fill some operational and exhibitions staff by £20k.
- 3.12 Furthermore, we would also envisage calling upon external, consultancy expertise to assist with the Gatehouse, Towns Fund and NLHF developments with a budget of £6,300 and a similar budget of £1,800 being set aside of consultancy support to help with capacity to deliver the National Portfolio Organisation application.
- 3.13 As such, the total call on one-off funding is for £56,100 which should be seen in the context of trying to meet the competing demands of trying to regain audience and visitor numbers, whilst simultaneously trying to manage the delivery of the Town's Fund project for the Castle Gatehouse of £2.6-million, the National Lottery Heritage Fund bid of £1.6-million and the National Portfolio Organisation application for an estimated £900,000 - £1million over three years.
- 3.14 If successful, the NLHF project creates 2 funded jobs, and the NPO would also fund staff positions and potentially apprenticeships, so we would be creating some job opportunities across the next 3 – 5 years. If successful, the NLHF project also includes funding for external support to deliver the strategic review of the business unit (£6K).
- 3.15 Longer-term, of course, the potential for successful applications is a key component of delivering a re-imagined town centre experience, based upon increased visitors and footfall and new economic benefits.

4.0 Equalities Implications

- 4.1 There are no equalities implications arising from this report which is about funding. However, should the funding being requested be granted, the schemes would be subject to their own equalities assessments, and both the NLHF and NPO funded opportunities will support an increase in inclusivity and equality in service delivery.

5.0 Digital Implications

- 5.1 None.

6.0 Financial Implications (FIN21-22/2319)

- 6.1 As set out at paragraph 3.11 the annual cost for an NS6 post (inclusive of on-costs at the top of the scale) is anticipated to be £28,490 during 2022/23. This includes assumptions in relation to pay awards for the current year and the 2022/23 financial year. This is based on the Councils assumption built into the budget for 2022/23 of a 2% pay award for both the current year and 2022/23. Where there are variations to this, this will generate a slight difference to the quoted value.

- 6.2 The figure of £20,000 quoted above relates to the ability to offer additional capacity to the Collections and Exhibitions Officer (NS6 current currently 0.5FTE) and for additional operational staffing hours at NS8. £10,000 of the £20,000 will allow the officer Collections and Exhibitions Officer to have additional time to support the development of the gallery, whilst the remaining £10,000 will support freeing up senior operations manager time in order to support the various projects. The latter will also be reviewing the Castle's conservations and management plan. It is anticipated that in both circumstances, this will be a maximum additional allowance and that the hours would be as and when needed, rather than a formal increase. The Business Manager would then need to work within each of the budgets.
- 6.3 The additional budgets as set out in paragraph 3.12 relate to 15 days consultancy at £420 per day in relation to the Castle Gatehouse NLHF bid - £6,300 together with consultancy support towards the application to the Arts Council for National Portfolio Organisation status of 4 days at £450 per day - £1,800. The latter is in relation to the potential of an annual £300,000 inward investment for three years which is subject to a separate report as set out in paragraph 3.8.
- 6.4 The total of the above is £56,100 which will need to be funded from the Change Management Reserve.

7.0 Community Plan – Alignment to Objectives

- 7.1 This work will contribute to the delivery of inclusive and sustainable economic growth by capitalising on the opportunities currently available to the team. If subsequent funding bids and plans are successfully delivered, these will contribute to multiple additional objectives, supporting local communities to actively contribute to their local area and supporting health and wellbeing.

8.0 RECOMMENDATION

That Members approve the allocation of £56,100 in support of the development opportunities arising in 2022/23 funded from the Change Management Reserve.

Reason for Recommendation

To facilitate delivery of a number of key strategic priorities for the Heritage and Culture Business unit.

Background Papers

Nil.

For further information please contact Matthew Finch on 01636 655715.

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