



Report to: Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and the Arts

Decision Date: 13 February 2026

Portfolio Holder: Cllr Rowan Cozens, Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and the Arts
Cllr Paul Peacock, Leader of the Council and Portfolio Holder for Strategy, Performance and Finance

Director Lead: Matt Finch, Director – Communities and Environment

Lead Officer: Carys Coulton-Jones, Business Manager - Heritage and Culture, Ext. 1704

Report Summary	
Type of Report	Open Reort / Non-key Decision
Report Title	National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) 5 th Year Extension Application
Purpose of Report	To seek approval to submit an application for a 5 th year extension of National Portfolio funding from the Arts Council Engand.
Recommendations	That: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) the application for a 5th year extension is submitted to the Arts Council England; and b) if successful, the budget for 2027-28 include £329,641 funded by the NPO Grant.
Alternative Options Considered	The application is not mandatory, however not applying will lead to a gap in provision, and may be detrimental to future bids for National Portfolio Organisation status and funding.
Reason for Recommendation	The Arts Council England funding has facilitated a rich programme of participatory events and activities targeting under-served communities and supporting the community plan objectives of improving cultural engagement, supporting community spirit and pride of place.
Decision Taken	As per the recommendations.

1.0	<u>Background</u>
1.1	<p>In 2023, NSDC's Heritage and Culture business unit were successfully awarded National Portfolio Organisation status, receiving £309,000 annually from the Arts Council England to deliver a programme activity and outreach for under-served communities. The award is highly competitive and recipients are seen as cultural leaders in their areas, with a collective responsibility to develop arts and culture.</p> <p>Requirements of the funding also included setting up an Oversight Board, which the Portfolio Holder for Heritage, Culture and the Arts sits on, and delivering against the Arts Council England's investment principles of dynamism, environmental responsibility, ambition and quality, and inclusivity and relevance. The original award was for three financial years from 2023/24 to 2025/26.</p>
1.2	<p>The Arts Council England has already extended the initial programme for a fourth year – 2026/27, and confirmation has just been received that, in addition to a 1.6% uplift in the current year, a 5% increase has been applied to 2026/27's funding level. There is now an opportunity to extend the programme for a fifth year in 2027/28. The timeline for this application process was announced in December, and the application window opened on 6th January 2026. The guidance for applicants is as follows:</p> <p><i>To apply for extension funding for 2027/28 you will need to do the following:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>provide a draft budget for 2027/28</i> • <i>provide a Yes/No answer to a question about whether your activity will remain broadly in line with your current funded activity</i> • <i>if you answer 'no' to the above question, you will need to provide a short text statement outlining the changes to activity</i> • <i>We will complete a risk assessment of your application that will also take into account our current monitoring of your organisation.</i> • <i>We will review the following risk types:</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ <i>financial viability</i> ○ <i>governance and management</i> ○ <i>activity</i>
2.0	<u>Proposal/Options Considered</u>
2.1	<p>It is proposed that the Heritage and Culture Business Unit submit an application for the 5th year extension which will remain broadly in line with previous activity and requesting the same level of funding - £329,641. This funding will continue to deliver a range of projects and programmes that work with under-served community groups and deliver outreach across the district.</p> <p>Currently our risk rating with the Arts Council England is in their low category. Our Board and governance arrangements are viewed as a</p>

	strength, and our activities to date have been well received and have met the majority of our targets.																																
3.0	<p><u>Implications</u></p> <p>In writing this report and in putting forward recommendations, officers have considered the following implications: Data Protection; Digital & Cyber Security; Equality & Diversity; Financial; Human Resources; Human Rights; Legal; Safeguarding & Sustainability and where appropriate they have made reference to these implications and added suitable expert comment where appropriate.</p>																																
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	<p><u>Legal Implications (DLC/IK1902)</u></p>																																
3.1	<p>The Localism Act 2011 gives the Council the “power to do anything that individuals generally may do”, and may “do it for, or otherwise than for, the benefit of the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area”. These powers give the Council the power to make applications for extensions of grant funding, such as this application to deliver a programme of activity and outreach for under-served communities, as detailed in this report.</p>																																
	<p><u>Financial Implications (FIN25-26/779)</u></p>																																
3.2	<p>The National Portfolio Organisation Fifth-Year Extension Application provides continued stability and security for existing employment. All project delivery costs would be fully funded, resulting in no financial impact on the General Fund.</p>																																
3.3	<p>Should the application be successful, during the budget process for 2027/28 £329,641 will be included, funded by the NPO Grant.</p>																																
<p>Background Papers and Published Documents</p> <p>Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.</p> <p>None.</p>																																	