



**Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 6<sup>th</sup> June 2022**

**Report of: Corporate Director – Finance and Resources**

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**Subject: THE ARCHES- WORCESTER LEGACY PROJECT**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the committee allocates £20,000 from the Arts and Culture Strategy Implementation Fund to support the Arches – Worcester legacy as part of Severn Arts' NOP status.**

**2. Background**

2.1 As part of the budget setting process for 2022/23 the Committee proposed that a reserve of £50,000 be created to support the implementation of the Arts and Culture Strategy. The proposal was accepted by Policy & Resources Committee and Full Council at the budget meetings in February and a reserve created from 1 April 2022.

2.2 The purpose of the reserve is to support the implementation of the Strategy and action plan, once it has been compiled, by providing a potential source of seedcorn or match funding when officers or Member of the Committee are approached to engage as partners in developments, or where ideas come forward that need resources for progressing these to fuller business cases. The report of 24 January 2022 stated that the amount of the reserve set aside would be reviewed once the Strategy and action plan was completed.

2.3 A draft Strategy for consultation is presented elsewhere on the agenda. In the meantime, officers involved in the Arches – Worcester project have been approached by Severn Arts to consider whether the Council will continue in partnership to support the legacy of the Festival strand of the Arches project. This request is part of Severn Arts' bid to become an Arts Council for England National Portfolio Organisation – which, if successful, would bring £400,000 per year for three years in Arts Council Funding to the city. It is anticipated that financial commitment by the Council will increase the likelihood of the application being accepted by demonstrating that the proposal has the support of the Council and is aligned with the developing Arts and Culture Strategy, which includes commitments to partnership working.

**3. Information**

3.1 Severn Arts is charitable arts company formed in June 2018 to lead, initially, Worcestershire's Music Education Hub, deliver an arts programme on behalf of Worcestershire County Council and support the Local Cultural Education Partnership. Since then, the organisation has sought to expand its remit and objectives.

In particular, since October 2018, Severn Arts has been a principal partner in the application for, and subsequent management of, the Arts Council's Cultural Development Funded Arches – Worcester project.

- 3.2 As well as being an active partner in the delivery of the project, Severn Arts has had specific responsibility for the Festivals strand which has delivered a series of events while developing community engagement in arts and cultural projects. This has included direct support for the Love the Arbo and the Mela festivals in the past year as well as engagement on the capital aspects of the project – the arches themselves – and the inclusivity strand through, for example, The Rising – a strand dedicated to increasing youth engagement in the festivals work.
- 3.3 The Arches project is nearing completion and all capital and revenue funding is due to be spent by 31 March 2023. The next step is to establish a legacy for the work done to date including occupancy of the Arches, public realm works and destination management, along with further development of the festivals and inclusivity strands. Severn Arts' application for NPO status is potentially a major strand in the creation of this legacy.
- 3.4 The Arts Council manages its support for arts and culture in England in a number of ways and develops these through its overarching strategy. The latest version of the strategy *Let's Create* covers the period 2020 – 2030. One element of the strategy is to support organisations through funding. The National Portfolio currently includes 828 organisation that hold 842 funding agreements and are – in effect – delivery partners for the Arts Council's strategy. The current arrangements are due to conclude in March 2023 and interested organisations have been asked to apply to become National Portfolio Organisations (NPO) from April next year.
- 3.5 Severn Arts has submitted an application which has a significant focus on the Arches – Worcester legacy project. An information paper has been provided which is attached at Annex A. The paper is requesting a contribution from the City Council to support the recruitment of a Community Producer. The role would work alongside the existing Festivals Director to ensure the longevity and prosperity of Worcester's community-led festivals and events, and community engagement in the wider festival programme.

#### **4. Preferred Option**

- 3.1 To contribute £20,000 from the Arts and Culture Strategy Implementation Fund as an initial one-off commitment to the role of a Community Producer.

#### **5. Alternative Options Considered**

- 5.1 Not to make the contribution. The Council, along with the other partners in the Arches – Worcester project is committed under the Cultural Development Fund to establish a legacy for the funding. The Severn Arts NPO application should, if it proves successful, provide an opportunity to continue with some of the key aspects of the project. In the event that it is not successful, the creation of the role of Community Producer would provide a resource to continue for a further year with some of the community-based aspects of the festivals strand while the partners develop further proposals.

## **6. Implications**

### **6.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications**

The Arts and Culture Strategy Implementation Fund has a balance at 1 April 2022 of £50,000. There are no other known commitments on the reserve at the date of this report

### **6.2 Legal and Governance Implications**

None directly arising from this report. Any allocation of funding would be in the form of a one-off grant and would be subject to the Council's normal governance processes for awarding grants to third parties.

### **6.3 Risk Implications**

There is a risk that the grant will not be used for the purpose intended. Close partnership working with Severn Arts will continue through the Arches – Worcester project Management Board which will oversee the development of the legacy for the project.

### **6.4 Corporate/Policy Implications**

The proposal will support the development of Arts and Culture within Worcester as part of the legacy of the Arches - Worcester project and will maintain the partnership between the City Council and Severn Arts and other arts organisations through the development of the Arts and Culture Strategy.

### **6.5 Equality Implications**

None directly arising from this report. The Community Producer role is designed to support inclusivity and access to the arts for all.

### **6.6 Human Resources Implications**

None directly arising from this report. The Community Producer would be a Severn Arts employee.

### **6.7 Health and Safety Implications**

None directly arising from this report.

### **6.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications**

The value that the Community Producer can add to local communities is set out in the Severn Arts paper annexed to this report.

**Ward(s):** All Wards  
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**Background Papers:** None