

## CABINET MEETING – 16 JULY 2014

### EXECUTIVE SUMMARY SHEET – PART I

**Title of Report:**  
**National Glass Centre**

**Author(s):**  
**Executive Director of People Services**

**Purpose of Report:**

To provide Cabinet with the background to the grant arrangements between the City Council and the National Glass Centre and to seek approval to continue with annual grant funding arrangements. The report also proposes the completion of an options appraisal in relation to the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art (ACE), in collaboration with Arts Council England and the University of Sunderland.

**Description of Decision:**

Cabinet approval is required under Financial Procedure Rules (16.6) for grants of over £50,000 in any one financial year. Cabinet are therefore requested to approve the continuation of grant funding (£91,000) to the National Glass Centre, subject to an annual review.

Cabinet is also asked to support a recommendation to progress an options appraisal to determine the most appropriate future arrangements for the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art.

**Is the decision consistent with the Budget/Policy Framework?** **Yes**

**If not, Council approval is required to change the Budget/Policy Framework**

**Suggested reason(s) for Decision:**

To continue to award a grant of £91,000 to the National Glass Centre under Financial Procedure Rules (16.6) which states that grants of over £50,000 in any one financial year must receive approval by Cabinet. The grant will be subject to an annual review to be undertaken during 2015/16 financial year.

NGC continues to go from strength to strength following a £2.3m refurbishment in 2013 with the addition of a new contemporary exhibition space and heritage gallery. The grant remains in place to support a high quality Outreach and Schools programme for the city to enhance our reputation, attract greater visitor numbers and offer our residents a diverse programme of cultural enrichment.

The SLA with NGC will be reviewed annually to ensure it meets the council's wider agenda of Economy, Health and Wellbeing and Education and Skills. Opportunities for joint partnership arrangements through the completion of the Cultural Strategy will also ensure opportunities are maximised and greater outcomes are achieved.

To strengthen NGCA's position as a leading contemporary art venue in the city and region, a review of its existing arrangements is required. This is further strengthened by ACE and University of Sunderland's commitment to work alongside the City Council in

considering alternative locations and models of delivery.

**Alternative options to be considered and recommended to be rejected:**

The option exists to withdraw from, or to reduce the level of grant offered however in doing so, there is a risk this would impact significantly on the National Glass Centre's Outreach and Schools Programme accessed by young people, schools, communities and families in Sunderland. In addition, it may have a detrimental effect on the existing service level agreement and the diverse cultural programme. It is proposed that the current grant arrangements continue through 2014/15 with a review in advance of the 2015/16 financial year.

**Impacts analysed;**

**Equality Yes    Privacy Yes    Sustainability Yes    Crime and Disorder N/A**

**Is this a "Key Decision" as defined  
in the Constitution?**

**Yes**

**Is it included in 28 Day Notice?**

**Yes**

**Scrutiny Committee**

**NATIONAL GLASS CENTRE****REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF PEOPLE SERVICES****1. Purpose of the Report**

- 1.1 To provide Cabinet with the background to the grant arrangements between the City Council and the National Glass Centre and to seek approval to continue with annual grant funding arrangements. The report also proposes the completion of an options appraisal in relation to the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art (ACE), in collaboration with Arts Council England and the University of Sunderland.

**2. Description of Decision (Recommendations)**

- 2.1 Cabinet approval is required under Financial Procedure Rules (16.6) for grants of over £50,000 in any one financial year. Cabinet are therefore requested to approve the continuation of grant funding (£91,000) to the National Glass Centre, subject to an annual review.
- 2.2 Cabinet is also asked to support a recommendation to progress an options appraisal to determine the most appropriate future arrangements for the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art.

**3. Introduction/Background**

- 3.1 Cabinet will be aware of the collaborative working between the Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art (NGCA), hosted by the City Council, and the National Glass Centre (NGC), hosted by the University of Sunderland.
- 3.2 This productive partnership has achieved recognition and funding from Arts Council England (ACE) and is accredited under their National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) arrangements for the contribution made to ACEs 10 year vision of Great Art and Culture for Everyone.
- 3.3 With the benefit of ongoing financial support from the City Council, ACE and Sunderland University, NGC has been able to achieve financial sustainability while extending its delivery of significant exhibitions and its reach into local communities.

**4. Current Position**

- 4.1 The NGC is supported by the City Council via annual grant arrangements established in 2006, currently in the sum of £91,000 per annum. It additionally attracts approximately £1.8m each year from a range of sources to ensure its ongoing sustainability as a key cultural asset for the city, which enhances our reputation, attracts visitors to the City and enables our residents to benefit from participation in a broad range of cultural activities.

- 4.2 In 2013-14, a £2.3m refurbishment has been undertaken which has doubled the exhibition and events capacity of the Centre, upgrading and modernising the gallery spaces, education and resource rooms and enabling the Centre to better meet the needs of the visitor, schools and groups. The NGC is home to more than 150 under-graduate and post-graduate students studying Glass, Ceramics and Art & Design Foundation. Around 10% of the student body have chosen to study at the glass centre from overseas. The Centre's Arts & Design Foundation programme has been recently ranked as "Outstanding" by Ofsted.

Since reopening, the Centre has exceeded visitor numbers, with over 220,000 visitors per year (increasing by almost 40% based on the previous year), making the National Glass Centre one of the region's most popular free cultural attractions. The refurbishment has also seen improvements made to exhibitions, learning and engagement programmes with an enhanced offer in terms of hospitality and trading arrangements.

- 4.3 The funding from the Council, governed by a Service Level Agreement, supports the continued positive impact on the City's broader cultural offer along with a clear focus on outreach and school programmes to provide greater opportunity for communities to engage with and participate in the arts.

Specifically the following are included in the Service Level Agreement:

- i) NGC to deliver a high profile and nationally significant exhibitions and cultural programme.
- ii) Extending NGC's education, community and outreach arts programme to provide greater opportunities for local people to access, engage and participate in the arts programme
- iii) Influence where possible local enterprise, arts and heritage skills opportunities including developing opportunities which can directly impact and support Creative Industries
- iv) Work in partnership with Sunderland City Council in developing a refreshed Cultural Strategy for the city
- v) Working in partnership with Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art and Sunderland Museum and Heritage Service to maximise opportunities for collaborative working through exhibitions, funding and programmes
- vi) Jointly promoting and championing cultural venues across the city
- vii) Maximising opportunities to work in partnership with the Council and others to promote audience development activity
- viii) Seek opportunities as a cultural partner to directly impact on the local visitor and tourist economy.

#### 4.4 National Portfolio Organisation

- i) In March 2011, the NGCA (currently located within the City Library) and the NGC were successful in a joint application to become part of the Arts Council England's new National Portfolio of clients (NPO). The two venues share a joint vision to present programmes of world class art by both emergent and established practitioners and aim to bring great art to the city in a welcoming, inspiring and informative environment.

- ii) The NPO partnership (2012-15) receives funding support from ACE on the basis of productive partnership working. The strengthening partnership between the Council and the University in the area of leadership, funding and collaboration is considered by ACE as crucial to the continued NPO investment.
- iii) ACE confirmed late 2013 that those organisations currently benefiting from NPO funding would be expected to re-apply in March 2014 for funding in the 2015/16 to 2017/18. Both venues submitted a refreshed NPO application to Arts Council in March 2014 for funding of approximately £1.6m to enable the continuation of the NPO arrangements. The outcome of the grant application is expected in July 2014 and if successful will ensure the delivery of an ambitious three year visual art programme across the two venues, the introduction of new strands of programming and enhanced opportunities to create an environment that will directly support new and emerging artists across the city.

#### 4.5 Northern Gallery for Contemporary Art

- i) Consistent with the Council's approach to Community Leadership work has been undertaken to explore ways in which the partnership between the Council and the University can be strengthened to develop the cultural offer for the city. A key area of work progressing is the development of a Cultural Strategy for Sunderland to provide a focus for us to build participation, creativity and prosperity across the sector through a collaborative approach.
- ii) NGCA continues to secure and deliver a high quality exhibition programme, however its location (based on the 3rd floor of the City Library and Arts Centre) limits the potential to expand its core offer and develop new audiences. Equally under the current resourcing arrangements, the gallery is unable to easily access the professional, technical and academic support needed to maximise its future potential and sustainability as a leading contemporary art venue for the city and wider region.
- iii) ACE have indicated that they would support development of an options appraisal, in collaboration with the University, to determine the most appropriate future location and management arrangements for the gallery.

### 5. Reasons for the Decision

- 5.1 To continue to award a grant of £91,000 to the National Glass Centre under Financial Procedure Rules (16.6) which states that grants of over £50,000 in any one financial year must receive approval by Cabinet. The grant will be subject to an annual review to be undertaken during the 2015/16 financial year.
- 5.2 NGC continues to go from strength to strength following a £2.3m refurbishment in 2013 with the addition of a new contemporary exhibition space and heritage gallery. The grant remains in place to support a high quality outreach and schools programme for the city to enhance our reputation, attract greater visitor numbers and offer our residents a diverse programme of cultural enrichment.

- 5.3 The SLA and level of grant provided to the NGC will be reviewed annually to ensure it meets the council's wider agenda of Economy, Health and Wellbeing and Education and Skills. The specific level of grant to be agreed by the Executive Director of People Services and the relevant Portfolio Holder considers the financial position of the NGC and the Council. Opportunities for joint partnership arrangements through the completion of the Cultural Strategy will also ensure opportunities are maximised and greater outcomes are achieved.
- 5.4 To strengthen NGCA's position as a leading contemporary art venue in the city and region, a review of its existing arrangements is required. This is further strengthened by ACE and University of Sunderland's commitment to work alongside the City Council in considering alternative locations and models of delivery.

## **6. Alternative Options**

- 6.1 The option exists to withdraw from, or to reduce the level of grant offered however in doing so, there is a risk this would impact significantly on the National Glass Centre's Outreach and Schools Programme accessed by young people, schools, communities and families in Sunderland. It is proposed that the current grant arrangements continue through 2014/15 with a review in advance of the 2015/16 financial year.

## **7. Impact Analysis**

- 7.1 Impact Assessments will be undertaken during the development of any proposed alternative service delivery model.

## **8. Other Relevant Considerations / Consultations**

- 8.1 Financial Implications - There is budget provision of £91,000 in 2014/15 financial year in respect of this grant which will be subject to a review in 2015/16.
- 8.2 Risk Implications - Appropriate grant terms and conditions should specify how the funding is to be used and allow for monitoring to ensure compliance with those terms and conditions. The impact that any loss/reduction of grant funding will have on the sustainability of the NGC operations generally and more specifically on the activities identified in paragraph 4.3 above should be taken into account in the review of grant intentions for 2015/2016.
- 8.3 Employee Implications – Following exploration of potential alternative service delivery arrangements there may be the potential for TUPE transfers of existing staff. The Trades Unions and employees will be fully engaged in developing any new arrangements
- 8.4 Property Implications – Future delivery arrangements may include a possible relocation of the NGCA, however it should be noted that the feasibility of this option has yet to be fully explored.
- 8.5 Procurement Implications – Any procurement implications from the alternative service delivery options will be considered in accordance with the Council Procurement Procedure Rules.

## **9. Appendix Items**

9.1 There are no appendices attached to this report

## **10. Background Papers**

10.1 The following background papers were relied upon to compile this report

- i) Cabinet Report – 12 July 2006 National Glass Centre
- ii) NPO Application to Arts Council (March 2014)
- iii) Draft Funding Agreement 2014/15 (subject to Cabinet Approval)

