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| Date | Wednesday 1 September |
| Time | 2.00 – 4.15pm |
| Location | MS Teams |
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| Present | Sukhy Johal (Chair), Fiona Allan, Pawlet Brookes, Cllr Abi Brown, Pippa Frith, Ayub Khan, Cllr Barry Lewis, Jennifer McKie, Jaivant Patel, Tanya Raabe-Webber (plus PA Jackie Cooley), Cllr Martin Straker Welds, Gary Topp Rebecca Blackman, Jane Dawson (item 4), Mark Done, Laura Dyer, Sue Elwell, Kathy Fawcett, Simon Fitch, Hugh James, Sharon Joinson, Sarah Kennedy, Peter Knott, Harinder Matharu, Alex Middleton (item 4), Amy Vaughan (item 3), Tom Wildish, Toby Norman-Wright |
| ApologiesObservers | Cllr Piara Singh Clair, Sarah Brigham, Cllr John ReynoldsJulie Finch, Emily Bowman |
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**Notes**

**Midlands Area Council Meeting**

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|  | WELCOME AND APOLOGIES1.1 The Chair welcomed Council Members and Management Team to the meeting1.2 Apologies were noted from Cllr Piara Singh Clair & Sarah Brigham and also that it was their last meeting. Apologies were also noted from Cllr John Reynolds 1.3 The Chair informed members that this was also Fiona Allan’s last meeting and would record our thanks later in the meeting1.4 New members, Jaivant Patel, Cllr Martin Straker-Welds and Cllr Barry Lewis, introduced themselves and existing members welcomed them1.5 The Chair explained that observers, Julie Finch and Emily Bowman were there so they are involved in the NPO 2023+ conversations as early as possible1.6 The rich breadth of experience of the Midlands Area Council’s incoming and outgoing members was noted |
|  | DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST2.1 The chair explained the atypical order of the agenda and that any matters arising from previous meetings were covered in the ED/AD reports2.2 He went on to explain that the full Declarations of Interest register is circulated for every meeting and members are required to keep their declarations up to date. 2.3 No conflicts of interests were declared at the meeting but the chair agreed to remind all members at the point in the agenda when the risk registers were discussed |
| 3. | **National Lottery Project Grants refresh**3.1Laura Dyer introduced the paper as one for information. She said the refresh was to ensure NLPGs are delivering against the delivery plan3.2 Amy Vaughan gave a presentation on how the current position had been reached which has been via an ideas assembly involving internal and external groups representing a breadth of interested stakeholders.3.3 She outlined the 5 work strands that had come out of the ideas assembly as* A simpler application process
* A refreshed advice giving programme
* The introduction of a CRM function
* Development of an integrated evaluation tool
* Reasonable expectations for match funding

3.4 After explaining each strand in more detail, Amy outlined the programme structure and its key features. She highlighted the two new strands, Place Partnerships and National Touring and summarised the timeline * September Overview drop-in sessions open to all staff
* Early October Guidance for applicants available for staff
* October Guidance published externally
* October – December Task and role specific training delivered
* Mid November Project Grants 1.0 closes. Project Grants 2:0 opens
* Mid December First Under £30,000 decision meetings
* Late January First Over £30,000 decision meetings

3.5 A member commented that moving the threshold of the amount that can be applied for had not been communicated clearly to the sector and asked that ACE improve these kinds of communications3.6 Several members pointed out that certain diverse groups often find it difficult to attract match funding and expressed an interest in discussing it further. Amy said that this was recognised and explained that testing was underway to establish what it is reasonable to ask for as match funding and to ensure that it exists throughout the fund and to all applicants |
| 4.**5.** | Design Principles NPO23+ Process4.1 The chair thanked those members who were able to attend the NPO 23+ workshops for doing so and for their contributions. He introduced Jane Dawson, Director, Funding Programmes, Investment who took members through the design principles of the NPO 2023+ process4.2 Jane outlined the draft timeline of the development stage and the key milestones of the delivery of the scheme which members were asked to keep confidential4.3 Jane moved on to describe the current thinking of the design principles for the programme and how they align to Let’s Create before taking members through the process for drafting and monitoring of the funding agreements4.4 Members were interested to know the difference, or similarity, in the assessments of national and regional applications and understood that all applications would be assessed in the relevant area of delivery. They also understood that Sector Support Organisations will follow the same process but will no longer be required to address outcomes4.5 In response to a member’s request for further clarity on NPOs applying for standstill / reduced funding which would require the organisation to re-profile their offer, Jane confirmed that organisations will be applying for standstill with uplifts only in exceptional circumstances. Funding agreements will reflect the agreed changes made during the negotiation period, particularly as that may relate to reduced offers4.6 A member expressed concern at the fragility of the diverse sector and the need for diverse organisations to get parity considering it is not a level playing field to begin with4.7 A member commented that if ACE money is going to be less it could be front loaded in order for NPOs to respond to Let’s Create and that the re-balancing of development work would be welcome4.8 Laura Dyer confirmed that lots of work is being done with the DCMS and detailed conversations are taking place alongside those about the delivery plan 4.9 Members recognised that while it is a challenging time for NPOs, churn is good, if it is appropriate to the delivery of Let’s Create4.10 A member asked how organisations will be supported if they are leaving the portfolio. It was noted that, there is no information available yet, but when it is, it will be forthcoming and transparentThe Portfolio in perspective5.1 Peter Knott, Midlands Area Director, introduced the agenda item and expressed that members should feel comfortable with their part in the process and that different aspects of the portfolio should be explored so that members feel they have played an important role in developing it and have ownership of it5.2 Members noted that the December meeting will be an informal meeting exploring the NPO portfolio, looking at it through “different lenses”5.3 Thomas Wildish, Senior Manager, Operations, continued by presenting a breakdown of the current 18-22 portfolio by artform, band, range of investment. The data also detailed* the top 17 largest clients in the portfolio where decisions are made by National Council
* the 41 new organisations bought in to the portfolio in 18-22 of which 24 were diverse led
* geographic spread
* level of investment in priority places

5.4 Fiona Allan left the meeting at this point. As it was her final meeting, she said goodbye and that it had been a privilege to be part of the Midlands Area Council and that she had learned a lot from colleagues for which she was grateful5.5 A member highlighted organisations, situated in Wales, and funded through the Midlands budget. Peter explained that this is because organisations based in Wales but delivering in England were organisationally represented in the Midlands budget. A similar arrangement exists for Scottish organisations delivering in England with the North team being responsible for their administration5.6 In response to a member’s question about whether there will be the opportunity for female led organisations to define as such if they are joint led, it was noted that more work was being done on our diversity definitions by the Diverse Action Group and Abid Hussain’s team5.7 A member queried why certain organisations are in the portfolio and some are not and asked if it was historic. Peter replied that it was largely because they have chosen to apply and explained some of the history around the construction of the portfolio5.8 A member commented that the portfolio demographic, whilst improved from previously, is not representative of the Midlands. They suggested there was some learning to be had from De Montfort University which has a very diverse student base5.9 A member noted that the Black Country organisations in the portfolio aren’t diverse led and requested work be done to encourage more diverse led organisations to apply to be in the portfolio5.10 A member suggested progress needs to be made with organisations at all funding levels and not just those at one or the other end. Tools need to be found to help members make decisions. They also felt that having an open amount to apply for will be challenging and a guide figure would be preferable5.11 Finally, the chair asked members to reflect on the provocations, and any others they have, and get in touch with him or Peter with any comments |
| **6.** | **MINUTES OF THE MEETING ON AND MATTERS ARISING**6.1 The minutes of the meeting held on 4 June were agreed as an accurate record.* 1. There were no matters arising.
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| **7.** | **AREA DIRECTOR AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR UPDATE AND RISK REPORT**7.1 Peter Knott spoke to the Executive Director’s report which included an update on * The Delivery plan which is intended to be published next week. Members will get the communication along with key points and key dates highlighted
* Area and National Council Away Day to which members were asked to sign up
* The City of Culture 2025 longlist

7.2 For the benefit of new members, Tom Wildish outlined the purpose of the risk report and the scoring process. Area Council looked through the risk register and noted high risk organisations and consider the register in relation to the Covid-19 pandemic |
| **8.** | **Chair’s Update**8.1 The chair thanked and wished outgoing members well and welcomed new ones8.2 He went on to explain the purpose and membership of the Disability Action Group which is open to all members with a disability and the Race Action Group. He reported that significant progress had been made by the groups but that the Disability Action Group requires greater sign-up8.3 Members noted the crisis in Afghanistan provided an opportunity to come together to welcome refugees and offer them cultural experiences 8.4 Members noted that the meeting on December 1st may be longer and will focus on the makeup of the National Portfolio. It is anticipated that the February meeting will be a hybrid meeting  |
| **9.** | **Any Other Business**9.1 There was no other business |
| **10.** | **Dates of future meetings****2021*** Wednesday 1 December

**2022*** Wednesday 16 February
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