

Cabinet

26 August 2025

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Education and Skills - Councillor K Sandhu

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Children's and Education Services

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Acceptance of the Music Hub Revenue Grant for the Strategic Area of Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull

Is this a key decision?

No - although the proposals affect more than two electoral wards the impact is not expected to be significant, and Coventry's allocation is less than £1m.

Executive summary:

On 25 June 2022 the Departments for Education and for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport published a refreshed National Plan for Music Education: The power of music to change lives, setting out government's priorities until 2030 for music education. Subsequently the Music Hubs programme changed from hosting 119 Hubs to 43 larger more strategic Hubs in place for September 2024, managed by Arts Council England (ACE).

From September 2024 Coventry City Council is the Hub Lead Organisation, as part of a consortium for the region of Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire, including 3 Local Authority Music Services and 30 additional Music Hub member organisations.

The arrangements are continuing for the 2025/26 academic year and the revenue grant for the Hub will be £1,708,871. The grant includes ringfenced funding for each Local Authority and for Coventry this is £549,373. This report seeks approval to accept the grant for the 25/26 academic year.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to:

- (1) Approve acceptance of the revenue grant for academic year 2025/26 from ACE to the sum of £1,708,871 and by way of such, acceptance that Coventry City Council will continue as the Music Hub Lead for the Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire region.
- (2) Approve the allocation of the necessary grant funds (derived from recommendation 1) to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council £355,704 and Warwickshire County Council £803,795, subject to the funding of other Hub member organisations as determined by the Music Hub Independent Board.
- (3) Approve entering into the necessary grant arrangements and other required legal documentation with ACE and Coventry City Council's delivery partners to deliver upon the requirements of recommendations 1) and 2).
- (4) Delegate authority to the Director of Children's and Education Services, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, to enter into such contractual arrangements to give effect to the above recommendations.

List of Appendices included:

None

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

- The power of music to change lives: a national plan for music education
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-power-of-music-to-change-lives-a-national-plan-for-music-education>
- Music Hub Funding Allocations and Conditions 2025/26
<https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/MusicHubs/Guidance>
- Department for Education Vision for Music Hubs <https://www.artscouncil.org.uk/our-open-funds/music-hub-investment/music-hub-investment-programme-geographies-future-music-hubs>
- New Music Hubs National Map <https://datawrapper.dwcdn.net/u50cw/9/>
- Coventry Music 2024/25 – A Year of Music Creativity and Community
<https://www.coventrymusic.co.uk/news/article/71/a-year-of-music-creativity-and-community-in-202425>
- Heart of England Music – Digital Music Festival
<https://www.heartofenglandmusic.com/news/article/1/live-music-digital-festival-1-min-of-music-videos-watch-now>
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Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

No

Report title: Acceptance of the Music Education Revenue Grant for the Strategic Area of Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1. On 25 June 2022 the Departments for Education and for Digital, Culture, Media, and Sport published a refreshed National Plan for Music Education: the power of music to change lives, setting out government's priorities until 2030 for music education. Subsequently the Music Hubs programme was announced as changing from 119 Hubs to 43 larger more strategic Hubs to be in place for September 2024.
- 1.2. Since 2012 Coventry City Council has been the lead organisation for the single Local Authority Music Hub, with independent local governance and a collection of delivery and strategic partners. The grant of approximately £530K per annum, based on a national funding formula, has been used to support both the Music Service and partners during this period.
- 1.3. In 2024 following consultation with partners Coventry City Council submitted a bid to be the Hub Lead Organisation in a consortium for the region of Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire. Coventry City Council subsequently became the lead organisation for 'Heart of England Music' the Music Hub for Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire, managing the revenue and capital grants on behalf of the 3 Local Authorities.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal.

- 2.1. During the 2024/25 academic year the 3 Local Authority Music Services work within the remits of an agreed Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and the Arts Council England (ACE) grant conditions to deliver the Hubs programme. The MOU will be updated for 2025/26 academic year to mirror the changes to the funding formula, any Music Hub Partners commissioned delivery, and any changes required due to updated grant terms and conditions for 2025/26.
- 2.2. The regional funding amount will be £1,708,871 for the 2025/26 academic year with £549,373 specifically allocated for Coventry. Coventry City Council will retain a £25k management fee from the overall grant allocation for management and reporting responsibilities. This is an increase from £8K in 2024/25 following a review of expectations during the first year of the new Hub programme. The ACE grant for Music Hubs is confirmed until August 2026. The national grant is allocated via a formula based on 90% per child in LA areas and 10% based on a free school meals calculation.
- 2.3. Music Hubs, as part of the grant conditions, must demonstrate an ability to generate additional match funding exceeding the grant amount. This can include income from partners of the Music Hub, which is recorded by ACE but does not go through the Music Hub's accounts. This condition is met as the total Music Hub traded income already exceeds the grant allocation. Options to develop the partnership model will continue to be explored to grow the service's income, expand the reach for Children and Young People, and explore efficiencies where appropriate.

- 2.4. To fulfil the conditions of the grant a board of stakeholders and partners has been established to provide external governance, including, but not limited to, Early Years settings, schools (including specialist), Further Education, Higher Education establishments and industry partners. The Board oversees the setting of SMART objectives for the regional music hub, monitors performance against educational targets, as well as overseeing fundraising, income and the financial management of partners.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal.

Decline the Award of the Grant Funding

- 3.1. Coventry City Council decide not to accept the grant. Without the financial resources the programme would cease across the Hub area and all assets bought through the Capital Grant would be returned to Arts Council England (ACE). Programmes delivered in schools and for families would increase in cost with the removal of the subsidy. This is not the recommended option.

Acceptance of the Grant Funding

- 3.2. Coventry City Council accept the grant and continue to co-ordinate the Hub programme, delivering music programmes in the City via Coventry Music and partners. Funding would continue to be awarded via the grant agreement to consortium partners and other Hub members to provide a varied, diverse and exciting music programme through the Music Hub. This is the recommended option.

4. Results of consultation undertaken

- 4.1. Prior to September 2024 consultation took place with the then Hub lead organisations and wider partnerships, who all agreed to support the Coventry City Council led consortium application for the region. The 1 year extension to the programme means an extension of the current Hub model and memorandum of understanding with the existing 3 Local Authority Consortium Partners and 30 additional member organisations to the Music Hub.

5. Timetable for implementing this decision.

- 5.1. The revenue grant will be accepted once approved to ensure a smooth programme of activity for the 2025/26 academic year.
- 5.2. A Memorandum of Understanding, Back-to-Back Grant Agreements and Asset Purchase and Management Agreements are already in place with the three Local Authorities and these will be updated when the new grant period starts as described earlier in the report.

6. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

6.1. Financial Implications

This grant award represents a continuation of the existing arrangements in which Coventry City Council is the lead organisation and accountable body for Heart of England Music Hub covering the geographical areas of Coventry, Warwickshire and Solihull. Coventry City Council will therefore be responsible for financial reporting to the Arts Council on behalf of Coventry City Council, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (MBC) and Warwickshire County Council. Funding will still be allocated for local authority areas by Arts Council England but will be managed by Coventry City Council with an independent board providing scrutiny and oversight. Coventry City Council will passport funding to Solihull MBC and Warwickshire County Council as appropriate.

A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) has been agreed between the three organisations, confirming how the Music Hub will operate. This will be reviewed and updated as appropriate for the new academic year. The MOU ensures any financial risk for Coventry City Council, as a consequence of acting as accountable body, will be transferred to Solihull MBC and Warwickshire County Council and includes details of reporting requirements so Coventry City Council can complete returns to Arts Council England within the timescales set out in the grant conditions.

Coventry City Council will not incur any additional costs to fulfil the requirements of being the accountable body.

Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council and Warwickshire County Council will continue to run music services in their areas, as per current practice. Therefore, there are no additional liabilities for Coventry City Council because of this grant award.

6.2. Legal Implications

S1 Localism Act 2011 gives the Council a general power of competence and as such the Council has the power to receive grant funding and enter into a grant arrangement.

Legal Services will perform all necessary review of the contractual agreements required to be entered into with Arts Council England (ACE) and draft the necessary grant agreements to Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, Warwickshire County Council and Coventry City Council delivery partners.

7. Other implications

7.1. **How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?**

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan>

Working together to improve our city and the lives of those who live, work and study here” The three delivery priorities: Improving outcomes and tackling inequalities within our communities; Improving the economic prosperity of the city and regions; Tackling the causes and consequences of climate change The two enabling priorities: Continued financial sustainability of the Council; Council’s role as a partner, enabler and leader

By continuing to lead the new Music Hub for the region we will continue to support all of the above priorities through the following:

- Enabling children and young people from across the whole city access and opportunities through music education.
- Developing funding opportunities for individual music tutors and small/large arts and cultural organisations to deliver music programmes and grow as sustainable businesses.
- Develop programmes and ways of working that tackle climate change – through innovation in use of technology, reuse of instruments and programmes using music and creativity to enable young people to share and highlight concerns.
- Continue to be a service area fully funded by grant and traded income.
- Support the wider cultural and education sectors in the city through our leadership role within the Music Hub and Cultural Education Partnership networks.

7.2. **How is risk being managed?**

The capital assets of the Hub Programme are owned by the Hub Lead Organisation including all musical equipment and resources. Should Coventry City Council cease being the lead organisation these would be returned to the Arts Council England (ACE) or an alternative lead organisation (if applicable). The Department for Education and ACE will be reviewing and keeping track of these assets via an Asset Register. ACE Relationship and Development Managers oversee the Hubs programme alongside an independent board for each Hub to ensure financial and other risks are managed.

7.3. **What is the impact on the organisation?**

No additional impact to the organisation as we currently manage the Hub Grant for the Music Hub, so no change to current working arrangements.

7.4. **Equalities / EIA**

The Equalities and Diversity team have confirmed that as we are delivering against a National Plan there is no need for a local EIA to be in place.

The Music Hub has an agreed Inclusion Strategy developed by the consortium and agreed by the 33 Member organisations and the Music Hub Board.

7.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

Arts Council England (ACE) have conditions around sustainability within the grant. We will therefore begin to explore creative ways to work and develop music education through programmes that support a Greener Future, aligned with Coventry City Council policies and Let's Create (ACE's 10-year strategy)

7.6. Implications for partner organisations?

Coventry Music currently supports, via cash funding or in-kind equipment/staffing, many local community arts organisations and 80%+ schools in the city, with over 7500 children and young people enjoying weekly music lessons. By ensuring that we maintain this grant we will be able to continue to support the Music Education Eco-system in the city.

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