



Coventry City Council

Briefing note

To: Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4)

Date: 29th January 2026

Subject: Request by Culture Coventry Trust to Dispose of Collection Items, in line with Relevant Policies and Accreditation Standards.

1 Purpose of the Note

1.1 To provide Members of the Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board (4) with the context and details of the latest request by Culture Coventry Trust to dispose of collections items, in line with relevant policies and Museum Accreditation standards. To provide Members of Scrutiny with information concerning the nature of each item proposed for disposal and the rationale behind each recommendation, thereby enabling Members of the Scrutiny Board to respond to the full proposals via means of a workshop and to agree recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities in reaching a decision on disposals.

2 Recommendations

2.1 The Communities and Neighbourhoods Scrutiny Board is recommended:

- 1) To note the contents of the presentation and report.
- 2) To respond to the full proposals via means of a workshop on 27th January 2026, or in writing to the Chair.
- 3) To make recommendations for consideration by the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities when reaching a decision on disposals.

3 Information and Background

3.1 Large municipal organisations such as Coventry City Council collect a wide range of historical and artistic artefacts over time, through a combination of statutory archiving, donations and gifts, bequests, loans, commissions, and purchases.

3.2 In Coventry the significant proportion of these items are on loan, entrusted to the care of Culture Coventry Trust by way of a Funding and Management Agreement entered into with the Council (the “Agreement”) and principally housed at Coventry Transport Museum, the Herbert Art Gallery and Museum, and in ancillary stores.

3.3 It is a requirement of Arts Council England’s (ACE) Museum Accreditation scheme that Culture Coventry Trust has a Collections Development Policy as part of the conditions laid down for granting Accredited Status to museums. Accreditation is a nationally recognised standard for Museums.

- 3.4 The national guidance for collections development policies is developed by ACE and the provisions of their template policy must be closely adhered to by organisations, to achieve/maintain Museum Accreditation status. This guidance includes the procedure to follow in the disposal of items from museum collections, contained within the 'Spectrum Standards on Deaccessioning and Disposal'
- 3.5 For one or more reasons, including the risk of contamination, a review of relevance and educational value of items to residents, or to free up space and resource to collect items of greater relevance to local people, the museum may periodically review arrangements and propose to dispose of certain items from the collections in its care.
- 3.6 It is important to note that 'Disposal' in this context is an asset management term, meaning deaccessioning/transfer out of the collection, rather than disposal in the waste/domestic sense.
- 3.7 The Collections Development Policy (Appendix 1) sets out the principles that will provide the governing bodies and workforce of the museums with a framework for responsible and ethical acquisition and disposal of collections. It provides clear procedures and decision-making processes common to Accredited Museums. The policy enables museums to demonstrate the public benefit in their approach to collections development. It provides a basis for open and transparent decision-making and an informed dialogue between governing bodies (including the Council), donors, funding bodies and other stakeholders.
- 3.8 The Council ensures that the Culture Coventry Trust's disposal process is carried out openly, with transparency and following the disposal procedures outlined in the Collections Development Policy 2024-2027.
- 3.9 At a previous meeting of the Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities held on 11 August 2025, it was agreed that when considering future collections disposals, the appropriate Scrutiny Board would be asked to consider items proposed for disposal and to have the opportunity to make recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member for consideration when making decisions regarding disposal.
- 3.10 As Culture Coventry Trust (CCT) has now made a further request to Coventry City Council for the disposal of items managed within the current collection, this is the first such occasion for wider Scrutiny involvement.
- 3.11 The items proposed for disposal are detailed in the link (Appendix 2) and comprise mainly ceramics and glassware.
- 3.12 The following factors (Disposal Preliminaries) must be considered before the Council agrees to dispose of any item in the collection:
 - Is the disposal motivated by curatorial reasons or financial reasons?
 - What are the proposed disposal options (gift, exchange, sale or destruction)?
 - Is Culture Coventry legally free to dispose of the object?
 - Estimated Value (where information is available according to minimum valuation thresholds)
 - Where applicable, have legal agreements with donors been considered?
 - Was the object acquired with the aid of an external funding organisation?

- If so, have the conditions attached to the original grant been followed?
- The full details on the curatorial reasons for disposal

3.13 The Culture Coventry Trust Board approved the disposal of all items listed in the linked document, for curatorial reasons, at their Board Meeting on 5 September 2025. In line with the Coventry Culture Trust Collections Development Policy and the Management Agreement, Culture Coventry Trust is now requesting the Council's approval to dispose of these items.

3.14 Culture Coventry Trust have confirmed to the Council that they are legally free to dispose of items, and any agreements on disposal made with donors will be taken into account. The Council, in consultation with the curatorial team from Culture Coventry Trust, are also comfortable that the Disposal Preliminaries for each artefact listed have been met, including sound curatorial reasons for the proposed disposals.

3.15 If approval is given to dispose of the items, the method of disposal, whether by gift, exchange, sale or destruction (in the case of an item too badly damaged or deteriorated to be of any use for the purposes of the collections), will be the responsibility of Culture Coventry Trust in collaboration with the Council acting on the advice of professional curatorial staff and not of the curator of the collection acting alone.

3.16 Priority will be given to retaining the item within the public domain. It will therefore be offered in the first instance, by gift or sale, directly to other Accredited Museums likely to be interested in its acquisition.

3.17 If the item is not acquired by any Accredited Museums to which it was offered directly as a gift for sale, then the museum community at large will be advised of the intention to dispose of the material, normally through an announcement in the Museums Association's Museum Journal, and in other specialist journals where appropriate.

3.18 A period of at least two months will be allowed for an interest in acquiring the material to be expressed. At the end of this period, if no expressions of interest have been received, the museum may consider disposing of the material to other interested individuals and organisations giving priority to organisations in the public domain.

3.19 Members of Scrutiny Board have been invited to an online workshop on 27th January, ahead of the Scrutiny Board meeting, to consider and provide recommendations (where applicable) on the items proposed for disposal. Members are invited to respond to the full proposals via means of the above workshop or in writing to the Chair, in order that Scrutiny Board may make recommendations to the relevant Cabinet Member for consideration when they are making decisions regarding disposals.

Appendix 1: Coventry Culture Trust Collections Policy 2024-27

Appendix 2: Collections item list

Name of Author: David Nuttall

Job Title: Strategic Lead – Culture, Sport, Events and Destination

Contact Details: David.Nuttall@coventry.gov.uk

Name of Author: Salla Virman

Job Title: Head of Culture and Creative Economy

Contact Details: Salla.Virman@coventry.gov.uk