

The Library

The role of the Advisory Board and Membership

Updated November 2025





Since becoming an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) in 2023, Gloucestershire Libraries has been on an ambitious journey to transform library spaces into vibrant, creative hubs for everyone. Rooted in local need and driven by community voices, our work champions innovation, inclusion and imagination.

Through bold partnerships, dynamic programming, and a strong focus on priority places and under-served groups, we're re-imagining what libraries can be - spaces where creativity, connection and communities thrive.

The projects and activities that sit under our NPO are delivered in addition to core Library services, which are still delivered in our Libraries.

What is a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO)?

The National Portfolio is a group of museums, libraries and art organisations that get regular funding from the national development agency, which invests public money for creativity and culture in England.

Our Feedback



“

“Great fun, gets us out of the house, meet people, talk”

“Excellent for the soul and mental health”

Choir Attendees

”

Said what they enjoy most about attending is
meeting others

100%

Of our choir members feel
the sessions meet their
needs and expectations



About Gloucestershire Libraries

Gloucestershire County Council provides 31 council run libraries, a Digital Immersive Storytelling Centre, access to a variety of online services and supports eight volunteer run community libraries. During 2023/24 Gloucestershire Libraries recorded approx. 1.5 million visits to their sites and approx. 1.5 million items borrowed both in person and online. Within six of our libraries there are Labs with a host of high-tech equipment to work with customers on digital innovation.

Over the past two years we have opened two new library spaces in Stroud and Gloucester. Stroud is now located within the Five Valleys Shopping Centre and Gloucester is apart of the University City Campus.

Our libraries are more than a place to borrow books, library buildings are accessible, safe community spaces that offer a range of activities, maker spaces and digital equipment for residents of Gloucestershire to use free of charge.

A five-year Library Strategy (2023-2028) has been developed with the staff team, for Gloucestershire libraries with the aim of the service is welcoming, inclusive, innovative, and inspiring.

Gloucestershire Libraries aim to be vibrant safe spaces at the heart of the county's diverse communities, through the 32 buildings we aim to encourage connections and creativity. It is important to provide equality of access to storytelling, culture, technology, trusted information, and learning opportunities.

Collaborative and partnership working is at the core of what we do. We work with and for communities in Gloucestershire and will continue to adapt and respond to changing needs, championing sustainability, and promoting health & wellbeing.

In 2025 we launched an ambitious Greener Together Strategy which sets out future ambition on the aims of Gloucestershire Libraries with environmental planning and projects.

Within the Library Strategy we have singled out five key areas that Gloucestershire will focus on over the next five years. These are titled the five C's - Core, Community, Connect, Climate and Creativity. These areas set out new ambitions to broaden the remit of what our libraries offer to local residents.



Our aims and objectives for the delivery of the Arts Council NPO 2023 - 2028

1

AGEING WITH CREATIVITY

Working with partners to deliver ambition through creativity with over 60s. This includes three **Library Choirs** and **Intergenerational Projects**

2

SPACE TO CREATE

Digital Bootcamps over a three year period, working with **industry professionals** & younger people with the aim to help with career development with creativity

3

FAMILY FOCUS

Work with early years children and their families delivering on regular **non-digital activities (Library Littles)** and the introduction of an annual **Family Festival**

4

TALENT DEVELOPMENT

Recruitment of a team of **paid ambassadors aged 14-21 years**, giving roles in advisory, project management, marketing as well as **shaping the future of the service**

5

STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Training for staff, specifically around **customer service and hard to reach groups**. Maintaining a **Development Team** to manage and support events

6

DATA AND INSIGHTS

A model for **monitoring and evaluation** of how our ambition is going. Constant collection of customer data for use of **future funding and a legacy of the projects**.

7

PARTNERS

The delivery will include relationship building with key partners; **Uni of Gloucester, Gloucestershire NHS, Archives, Dementia Action Alliance**, and many more.

Purpose of the Advisory Board

The Advisory Board provides a formal structure for stakeholders to oversee and provide independent assurance on the work of Gloucestershire Libraries National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) and provide collaborative leadership in shaping its direction in order to improve the cultural offer for residents of Gloucestershire.

The Board will be consulted on service delivery elements linked to the funding, such as marketing, programming and data analysis. They also support on local priorities, artistic direction and content and invited to give views on the future strategic direction of the National Portfolio Organisation. The Advisory Board's focus is on cultural provision and the contributions the service makes to the Let's Create Strategy outcomes.

The financial responsibility for the NPO lies within Gloucestershire County Council. The Board will formally adopt the Terms of Reference and the conflict of interest Policy set out in this document. Both are reviewed annually.

The Board will:

- Meet regularly to maintain an overview of priorities for the Gloucestershire Library Service NPO, supporting delivery within the local, national, and regional context.
- Make recommendations regarding the cultural programme's aims and objectives based on the strategic priorities of Arts Council England and the stated aims and objectives of Gloucestershire Library Service.
- Play an active role in ensuring that the four Arts Council England Investment Principles are embedded in the culture and working practices of Gloucestershire Libraries. The Advisory Board will review progress against the Investment Principles ambition, priorities, and actions at quarterly meetings.
- Provide support and robust challenge to ensure that performance meets targets set in the Activity Plans including outputs, targets and success measures. Progress will be monitored at quarterly meetings.
- Review the programme in terms of excellence; inclusion for diverse audiences; access provision; audience reach and artist support.
- Review management accounts, risk register, action plans at quarterly meetings, addressing any concerns. Final authorisation of the budget remains with the Gloucestershire County Council.
- Provide support and guidance to the Library Service to secure additional income generation to ensure sustainability and growth.
- Raise the profile of the activity programme with internal departments and external organisations with a view to generating new artistic and partnership opportunities.



Other Duties may include:

- Play an active and supportive role with the team leading and delivering on the Arts Council ambitions
- Attend meetings with Arts Council England if requested
- Attend any training that is relevant to the position
- Attend Gloucestershire Libraries events throughout the year
- Attendance at sub-committees in-line with key elements of the NPO with members of the Development Team

Reporting Responsibilities

Arts Council England expect Advisory and Board Minutes and papers to be reported quarterly.

The following papers will therefore be produced and considered by the Board, before Gloucestershire County Council submits them to Arts Council England:

- Agenda for board meeting.
- Minutes from the previous board meeting.
- Up-to-date financial information, including:

Quarterly accounts which will include the original budget set for the year, the budget, and actuals for the period and to date, the resulting variances, and revised projections to the end of the year.

Most recent cash flow statement, including opening balances and a forecast to the end of the year.

Final (annual) financial statements.

- Updated risk register(s).
- Progress reports against the targets and success measures set out in the activity plan. These reports should identify any areas of activity where insufficient progress is being made and include appropriate plans and actions to be considered and approved by the board to help mitigate risks and/or increase progress and performance.

The Board will make whatever recommendations it deems appropriate on any area within its remit where action or improvement is needed before Gloucestershire County Council submits the papers to the Arts Council England. It will also make decisions in order to progress matters of a timely nature.





Advisory Board Membership

The Advisory board consists of 12 individuals with a diversity of perspectives and expertise to ensure internal challenge and support.

There are clear distinctions between the role of the Advisory board and the operational management of Council officers.

Independent board members make up the majority of the Advisory board.

Gloucestershire County Council Officers and Gloucestershire County Council's Cabinet Member, that sit on the Board hold ex-officio seats (non-voting).

The Board will consist of a Chair and Vice-Chair. The remaining roles will ideally be made up of people with a specific interest in the following areas:

- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion
- Finance and fundraising
- Arts & Culture
- Data and community profiling
- Health & Social care
- Marketing
- Human Resources
- Project Management & delivery
- Staff representation (non-voting)

Additional Duties of the Chair

- To liaise with Library Service officers regarding the agenda for each meeting.
- To conduct the quarterly meetings and ensure Advisory board decisions are carried out in line with the Terms of Reference.
- To give focus to the Advisory board on critical tasks.
- To attend annual National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) review meetings alongside the Library Senior Leadership Team with Arts Council England.

Frequency of Meetings

Meetings will take place quarterly. Arts Council England release payments quarterly on the receipt of minutes and board papers of the Advisory board meeting and a financial statement.

Board meetings will be arranged to fall in line with this payment schedule.

Additional full board meetings may be required for important decisions.

Sub-groups to focus on a specific areas of development may be set up, as required. In these instances, volunteers from the Advisory board members will be sought and special requests made of particular individuals where their skill set would be valuable.



Recording of Meetings

All meetings are documented as formal minutes which are available to stakeholders and provided to Arts Council England quarterly.

The Board may meet remotely, via video conferencing and decisions and recommendations can be made via email. Notice of meetings held remotely will be three working days before the meeting, unless otherwise agreed.

Terms of Board Membership

The appointment of the Chair will be made by the Head of Library & Registration Services and Development Manager and will be held for 2 years with re-appointment possible after this period.

Appointments to the board will be made by the Head of Library & Registration Services and the Chair of the board and will be for a period of two years, but members may subsequently be appointed for more than one term.

A quorum of 40% external members in attendance is needed for key decisions to be agreed or declined. Advisory board Members can be asked for authorisation on decisions via email.

Where there is an equality of votes, with no clear majority, the Chair will hold the casting vote.

Each board member should endeavour to attend all board meetings during the year and are required to attend at least two of the scheduled meetings each financial year.

In the event of a board member failing to do this, or other persistent non-attendance then the tenure of that member should be reviewed by the other board members and their removal recommended to the Head of Library & Registration Services for final decision.

Other than by ceasing to be eligible, a board member may only be recommended for removal from office during a term of appointment by the unanimous agreement of all of the other members in attendance at the board Meeting where this is being considered. Board members can be removed on grounds of non-attendance, breach of code of conduct and non-participation. The final decision on a member's removal will be taken by the Head of Library & Registration Services. The removal of the Chair also requires the consent of the Head of Library & Registration Services.

Advisory boards do not have legal status so they cannot have responsibility for a budget, enter into contracts or legal agreements, or be held legally liable. These responsibilities remain with the local authority.

Recruitment Policy for Board Members

The recruitment policy is open and transparent with all opportunities advertised through the library website. Advisory board recruitment will be on an ongoing process, with any future recruitment may be undertaken to increase board membership as and when required.

At all times consideration should be given to the “balanced appointment” objective.

The “balanced appointment” objective referred to is the objective that members of the oversight board (when taken together):

- a) Are balanced in terms of equality and diversity;
- b) Are independent of the Council’s library officers and staff with exception of the ex-officio seats (non-voting)
- c) Have the skills, knowledge and experience necessary to discharge the duties of the membership;

Board members must be at least 16 years of age and legally eligible, i.e. you must not be eligible for automatic disqualification by The Charity Commission.

Conflict of Interest

Advisory board members are required to declare any interests that are relevant and material to their role and which they might reasonably be expected to know about. Known interests should be declared on appointment or as soon as they arise or become aware of them.

A register will be kept relating to any board member potential conflicts of interest.

The Board will have a standing conflict of interest declaration item on the agenda and any conflict of interest relating to specific agenda items will be declared at the start of each Advisory board meeting.

Where an Advisory board member declares any direct or indirect financial interest in an item under consideration, the individual must withdraw from the discussion, leave the meeting and not be part of the quorum during any meeting in which a relevant matter is discussed.

Where an Advisory board member declares any other potential conflict, the board shall consider the relevant steps to be taken to manage any potential conflict which may include:

- Allowing the board member to be part of subsequent discussion and voting as normal.
- Taking part in the discussion but not the decision.
- Withdrawing from both the discussion and decision making.

Conflicts of Interest will be formally documented in the minutes of the meeting. The minutes will include:

- The nature and extent of the conflict.
- An outline of the discussion.
- The actions taken to manage the conflict.

Complaints

Internal and external complaints can be made via the Gloucestershire County Council complaints system.

KEY CONTACTS

Patsy To

Head of Libraries and Registration

Emily McKeown

Chair of the Board

For more information contact:

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