

February 2026

The Higgins Bedford is a Bedford Borough Council Culture & Heritage service and an Arts Council England National Portfolio Organisation for the period 2023-27



RECRUITMENT PACK

The Higgins Board



Bottom right: *Carnival Throne* oil on canvas, 200cm x 200cm - Quilla Constance, 2023. Image credit: Quilla Constance

SUMMARY

The Higgins Bedford is looking for people to join its advisory group, The Higgins Board.

THE HIGGINS BEDFORD

The Higgins Bedford is a Bedford Borough Council cultural service that showcases wonderful and varied collections of fine and decorative arts and changing exhibitions drawn from the nationally significant collection of British watercolours, drawings and prints. Displays of archaeology, social history and ethnography tell the story of local people and how Bedford has developed over time. These collections inspire a programme of temporary exhibitions, active learning and events.

The Higgins Bedford is a National Portfolio Organisation (NPO) of Arts Council England (ACE), for the current investment period 2023-27.

THE HIGGINS BOARD

The Higgins Board is a new oversight and advisory group that has been created to support The Higgins Bedford in moving to its next stage of development. It supports the shared objectives, and is independent of, Bedford Borough Council and the Trustees of Cecil Higgins Art Gallery, to enable The Higgins Bedford to set and deliver against a more ambitious strategy and to improve its ability to generate income and raise funds. We want the membership of the Higgins Board to reflect the skills that will help us to deliver this strategy and the diversity of Bedford's communities.

The Higgins Board also has oversight responsibility for The Higgins Bedford's National Portfolio funding agreement with Arts Council England.

We would love to hear from people who have the skills or experience to join the Higgins Board

Board members are responsible for supporting The Higgins Bedford's strategic direction and the team in achieving the organisation's aims and objectives. Members are unpaid volunteers who give a few hours each month to attend meetings and events.

THE HIGGINS BEDFORD

The Higgins Bedford's mission is to be a cultural facility for all people to enjoy, explore and learn from the visual and decorative arts, archaeology, social and natural history, through fresh and exciting programming and the development of our collections.

Our work encompasses:

- Showcasing and celebrating our local cultural heritage, with high quality displays and interpretation.
- A popular programme of exhibitions drawn from nationally significant collections.
- A well thought of engagement programme, with our community at the heart of what we do.
- Formal and informal learning programmes for people at all stages of their lives.
- Management of and encouraging access to the collections.
- Income generating activity including retail and venue hire.

Our focus during the ACE National Portfolio funding period is on: developing our schools learning and Early Years activity programmes to reach people in areas of lower cultural engagement; delivering exhibition and heritage interpretation projects that align our collections with effective community engagement, through working with community partners; and, developing our creative and wellbeing activity offer for adults.

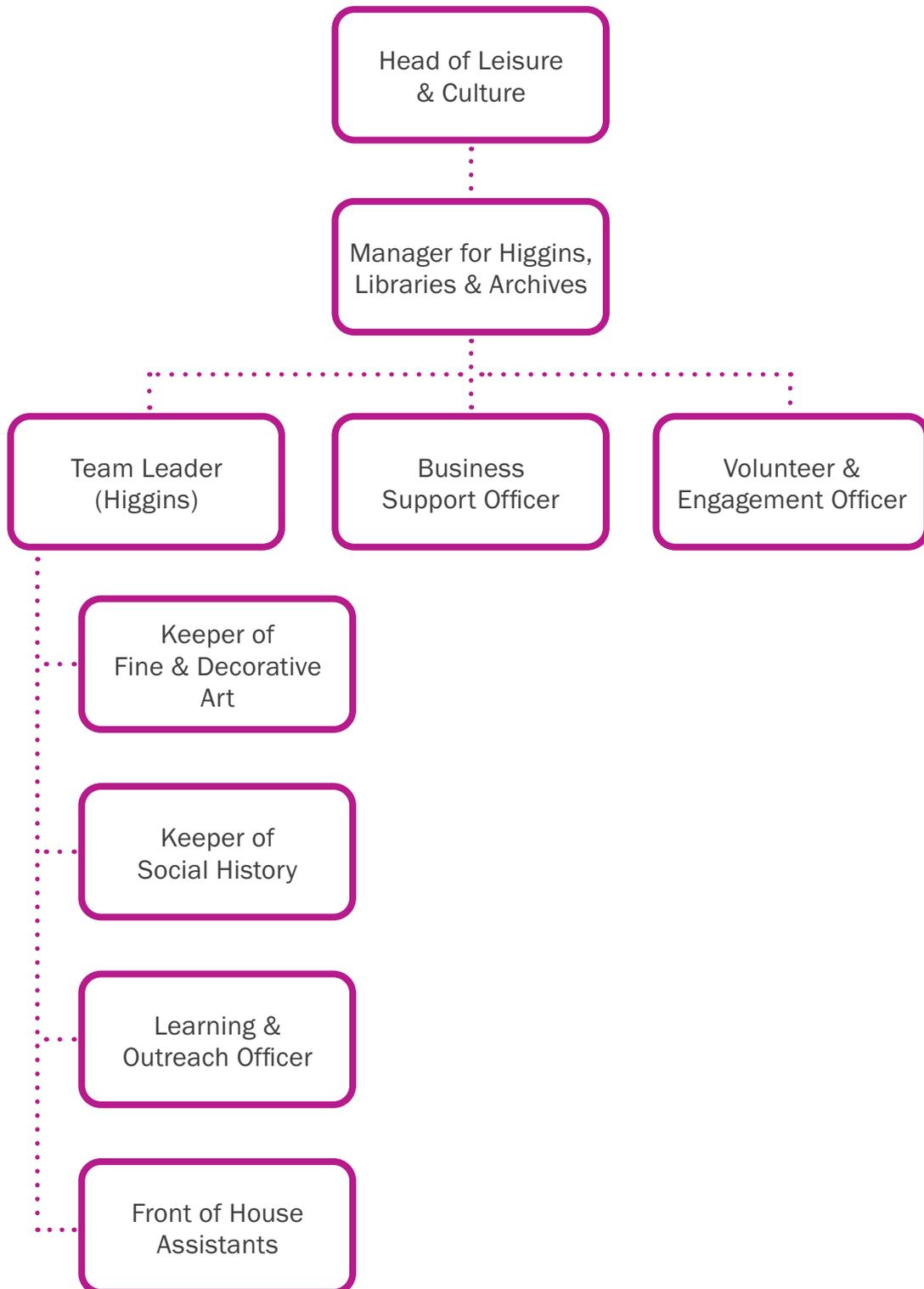
The Higgins Bedford is housed in historic buildings that bring together three formerly separate facilities following a major redevelopment in 2013. Our work since then has seen us focus on working with and for our local communities. We have developed valuable place-based partnerships and developed links with our community that have had a demonstrable impact on our programming, progressing towards our vision of being a cultural hub working in partnership with Bedford's diverse communities.



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OUR TEAM

The Higgins Bedford is a small team under the management of the Bedford Borough Council Manager for Higgins, Libraries & Archives, whose role extends to other cultural services including Libraries and Archives & Records Management. It sits within the Leisure & Culture division of the Council's Environment Directorate.



GOVERNANCE

The Higgins Board has been established through a Memorandum of Understanding between Bedford Borough Council (the Council) and the Trustees of Cecil Higgins Art Gallery (the Trustees) in recognition of and to advance their shared objectives for The Higgins Bedford.

THE COUNCIL

The Council is responsible, and provides core revenue funding, for the operational management of The Higgins Bedford, including staffing. It owns and is responsible for the buildings housing the museum and art gallery, and the Council-owned museum collections.

THE TRUSTEES

The Trustees own the Cecil Higgins Collection of fine and decorative art, and loan the Collection to the Council for the purposes of providing a museum. The Trustees have authority over elements of the management and use of the Collection, and are able to apply the income of the Trust Fund for specific Collection-related purposes.

THE CECIL HIGGINS ART GALLERY BOARD

The governance arrangements surrounding the Cecil Higgins Collection allow for the provision of an Art Gallery Board, whose role is to give their consent and approval to specific matters relating to the management of the Collection.

THE HIGGINS BOARD

The role of the Higgins Board is to:

- Advise the Council on the strategic direction and operation of The Higgins Bedford, enabling it to fulfil its potential as a cultural attraction.
- Support the achievement of The Higgins Bedford's strategic aims through an effective fundraising strategy that reduces its dependence on the Council.
- Fulfil the role of oversight group in relation to The Higgins Bedford's National Portfolio Funding Agreement with Arts Council England.



Image © Russell Cobb

MEMBERS OF THE HIGGINS BOARD

We are seeking people to join the Higgins Board

Board members are responsible for supporting The Higgins Bedford's strategic direction and the team in achieving the organisation's aims and objectives. Members are unpaid volunteers who give a few hours each month to attend meetings and events.

WHAT WE ARE LOOKING FOR

We want to develop a Board that is balanced with the right skills to help us deliver against our ambition and strategic aims.

We are particularly interested to hear from people who have advisory board or trustee experience, and/or senior leadership experience, and skills or experience in one or more of the following areas:

- Fundraising and income generation
- Working with and listening to diverse communities
- Arts and cultural organisations
- Health & Wellbeing
- Partnership and place-based working.

We want the Board membership to be reflective of the diversity of Bedford's communities and The Higgins Bedford's audiences. We will not prejudice applications based on background – we want to ensure we have the right balance of skills and experience on the Board – but we would like this diversity to be reflected in our decision-making.

It is our aim that the Higgins Board is:

- Balanced with skills and experience
- Reflective of the diversity of Bedford's communities
- Engaged in and able to support our fundraising objectives
- Passionate about the role of arts and culture in Bedford Borough.

TERMS OF APPOINTMENT

- We are looking to recruit up to five members to the Higgins Board.
- Board members should expect to serve for no more than two terms of three years. Members are expected to attend scheduled meetings as well as some ad hoc meetings and events. The time commitment is anticipated to be the equivalent of a few hours per month.

HOW TO APPLY

1. Speak to us

If you would like to apply to be a member of the Higgins Board, please contact Tom Perrett, Head of Leisure & Culture first at tom.perrett@bedford.gov.uk for an informal discussion.

2. Make an application

Following this discussion, if you wish to apply, please send a CV and short covering letter outlining why you are interested in, and why you think you are suitable for, the role to tom.perrett@bedford.gov.uk.

Please ensure your application contains:

- Your contact details
- Information about your work experience (e.g. employers, roles)
- Details of your education and relevant training/qualifications and experience

Please also include a completed skills audit form, which will be issued to you by the Head of Leisure & Culture. This is to help us see how your inclusion on the Board would complement the skills of existing members.

Applications will be assessed on an ongoing basis until all Board positions are filled. Applications will be assessed by the Head of Leisure & Culture, the Chair of the Higgins Board and one other Board member.

3. Attend an interview

If we feel that your application suits the needs of our Board, you will be invited to an informal interview at a time to suit you so that we can get to know you better. This will be with the Head of Leisure & Culture, the Chair of the Higgins Board and one other Board member.

4. Join the Board

If we both feel that the interview has gone well and there is a good fit with the Board, you will be invited to come to the next Board meeting as an observer. This is a chance for you to see what being a Board member is really like and decide if you feel it would suit you. If it is, you will be elected on to the Board and your induction process will begin.

Thank you for your interest in this role and joining the Higgins Board.

Privacy Notice

In order to deliver services to the citizens and communities in Bedford Borough, it is necessary for the Council to collect, gather and process personal data about residents, staff and other individuals. Bedford Borough Council is committed to protecting your personal data when you use its services and/or correspond with it. The Council has registered as a Data Controller with the Information Commissioner's Office (Registration Number Z5916725).

As a Data Controller, the Council sets out the purposes and methods for processing information and ensures safeguards over any personal and special category information it processes. In relation to applying for a role on the Higgins Board, Bedford Borough Council will process the personal data provided by you for the purpose of processing the application, on the Lawful Basis of consent of the data subject.

Your data will be shared with the selection panel, which includes third parties, for the purpose of reviewing applications and undertaking interviews. We may also share your data with third parties for example to obtain references.

All application data from unsuccessful applicants will be destroyed. Personal data from successful applicants will be held by the Council within the UK or the EU, for the term of the individual's membership of the Higgins Board only, and subsequently destroyed.

Equal Opportunities

Bedford Borough Council is an Equal Opportunities Employer and positively welcomes applications from all members of the community irrespective of age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, and sexual orientation. Selection is on merit alone. We are committed to the fair treatment of employees, applicants and all service users.

