

Joint Museums Committee**Monday, 23 November 2015, County Hall, Worcester - 2.00 pm****Present:****Minutes**

Mr M L Bayliss (Chairman), Mr A N Blagg,
Mrs L C Hodgson and Mr A C Roberts

Officers

Iain Rutherford, Museums General Manager (Museums Worcestershire)
Helen Large, Marketing and Events Manager (Museums Worcestershire)
Neil Anderson, Held of Community and Environment (Worcestershire County Council)
Philippa Tinsley, Senior Curator - Collections and Interpretation (Museums Worcestershire)
Simon Lewis, Committee Officer (Worcestershire County Council)

Available papers

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated) and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2015 (previously circulated).

A copy of document A will be attached to the signed Minutes.

**248 Named
 Substitutes
 (Agenda item 1)**

None.

**249 Apologies/
 Declarations of
 Interest
 (Agenda item 2)**

Mrs L C Hodgson declared an interest as Cabinet Member with Responsibility for History and Heritage at Worcester City Council.

**250 Confirmation of
 Minutes
 (Agenda item 3)**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2015 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

251 Hartlebury presentation (Agenda item 4)

The Joint Committee received a presentation from Peter Middleton of L&R Consulting as Project Director. He made the following points:

- He thanked officers from Museums Worcestershire and the County Council for their help in getting the project to its current position
- The purchase of the Hartlebury site had been completed in March 2015. Negotiations with the Church Commissioners had taken 6 months in total which was double the expected time
- The original plan for the café was to remodel it and build a new extension. However the local planning authority had indicated that they would only grant a temporary permission for 5 years for such a new build. This created a problem as HLF would not provide funding for temporary buildings. In the light of the planning issue, the design team remodelled the design of the workshop and café. The new design included a larger café area in a more pleasant setting which avoided any internal alterations to the building. However HLF would not fund the scheme until planning permission was sought for the revised plans. Planning permission had now been granted by Wychavon District Council and the scheme could now proceed
- The rest of the scheme remained unchanged from the original submission to HLF
- The project would be in two phases. The first phase included the construction of the café and workshop, landscape works, extension to the car park, and preparatory work for the circular walk. The programme for Phase two had had to be reworked and had been set back a year. It included a revised approach to the construction work in the Bishops Palace. It was anticipated that the work would be completed by Spring 2017
- The Museum would continue to operate throughout the construction periods albeit with access issues at times to allow certain works to take place. Disruption would be kept to a minimum
- The Strategy for the operations of the Trust had been revisited. It was considered that the original Strategy contained an unnecessary element of risk for the Trust. The new arrangements were clearer and simpler and played to the strengths of all parties. Responsibility for the Revenue Grant and the core administrative strategy rested with the County Council. The Trust would take on responsibility for the new commercial elements including the café, the shop and hiring of the

Bishops Palace

- A new surplus shares arrangement had been introduced which would allow Museums Worcestershire and the Trust to have a share of rising income. The Trust would therefore have better protection from the risks associated with adverse financial conditions
- He hoped to get any outstanding information to HLF by the end of the week. HLF had indicated that they were unlikely to require a further meeting with the project team. Therefore it was hoped to get permission to start the enabling work shortly.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- Would it be appropriate at this stage to renew the marketing campaign for the site to remind the public of the proposals? Peter Middleton commented that the marketing strategy would be reviewed. The County Council had secured ACE resilience funding for which the Trust was a partner. Once the marketing post was filled, he anticipated that a series of marketing initiatives would be undertaken leading up to the completion of Phase 1 of the scheme
- Croome Park had gone through a similar regeneration scheme. Had there been any contact with that project team to share knowledge? Peter Middleton advised that the work at Croome Park was relevant and contact had been made with its team
- In response to a query about the accessibility of artefacts at the Bishops Palace, Peter Middleton stated that there was a loan arrangement with the Church Commissioners to allow historic paintings and pictures to be displayed. There were no plans for the purchase of new artefacts but it was possible that loan items would be displayed
- Would the displays at the Palace be set in a particular historical period or over-time? Peter Middleton indicated that the displays would tell stories over time although certain displays eg the Long Room could only be displayed in a particular era
- In response to a query about the grounds and historical context, Peter Middleton explained that the first phase of the scheme would include the creation of the circular walkway from the house around the edge of the lake, through the coppice and back to the house. Most of the work would be

straight-forward to complete. Hereford and Worcester Garden Trust had offered to do research work in relation to the historical context of the gardens

- The Head of Community and Environment (Worcestershire County Council) commented that although there was a complicated set of arrangements in place between the partner organisations for the operation of the site, the public would see a single integrated indoor and outdoor offer
- In response to a query, the Head of Community and Environment explained that Museums Worcestershire and the County Council would have separate responsibilities under the new arrangements. The County Council would have responsibility for property matters. Museums Worcestershire would employ the front of house staff and provide marketing support
- Peter Middleton explained that at one point the scheme was a year behind schedule. However the work to be done at the Bishops Palace was not complicated (apart from the construction of the lift). Contracts had been split up to ensure that the work of the contractors was focused. It was anticipated that the main building work would take six months to complete with a final completion date in Spring 2017.

RESOLVED that the presentation on the future operation of Hartlebury be noted.

**252 Collection
Development
Policies
(Agenda item 5)**

The Joint Committee considered the revised Museum Collection Development and Collection Management Policies.

In the ensuing debate the following principal points were raised:

- The Senior Curator (Collections and Interpretation) explained that the shared service was required to apply for national Museums Accreditation every 3-5 years. It was therefore necessary to update the policies and procedures in advance of the next application to the Arts Council
- In response to a query about archiving, the Senior Curator stated that the City Council included an archive of glove making, which was more appropriate in the museum collection than the archives, however the shared service had sought

advice from the County Archivist about the County Council's approach to disposal procedures. It was the County Council archive service that maintained archives on behalf of the County Council

- The approach taken in the Acquisition and Disposal Procedure was appropriate and sensitive in its handling of the disposal of artefacts
- The Collections and Disposals Policy made reference to the refusal to accept the loan of artefacts on a long term basis. The Senior Curator explained that the long term loan of artefacts to the shared service could be administratively complicated. It was difficult to keep up-to-date records of the ownership of artefacts over time. It was not possible to get permission to conserve, return or dispose of artefacts where contact had been lost with the owner. It was recognised nationally as good practice to phase out long term loans. The Council did still have long term loan artefacts but these were treated as recurring short term loans
- In response to a query, the Senior Curator confirmed that there were no artefacts held that related the spoliation of works of art during the Nazi, Holocaust and World War 2 period
- In response to a query about unethical sales, the Senior Curator highlighted the example of Northamptonshire museums service who had sold a high value piece of work without the necessary adherence to procedures and as a result had been de-accredited and HLF had refused to provide any funding
- The Senior Curator explained that the Sheldon Tapestry was not owned by the County Council and therefore the shared service were unable to request its return
- The Senior Curator confirmed that she was already implementing plans to rotate the display of paintings/pictures at all museum sites
- Were there any artefacts within the collection that could be considered for return to its country of origin? The Senior Curator advised that there was a Maori jaw-bone in the collection and talks had been held with a New Zealand Museum about the possibility of it being returned to them. As a general rule, the service was open to returning artefacts if it had no strong connection with Worcestershire.

RESOLVED that:

- a) **The revised Museum Collection Development and Collection Management Policies be approved: and**
- b) **The two Collection Development Policies be recommended for approval by Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council.**

253 Succession Planning (Agenda item 6)

The Joint Committee considered approving the Succession Planning Statement for Museums Worcestershire.

In the ensuing debate, in response to a query, the Senior Curator (Collections and Interpretation) commented that the service was investigating the possibility of participating in an apprenticeship scheme.

RESOLVED that the Succession Planning Statement for Museums Worcestershire be approved.

254 Environmental Policy Statement (Agenda item 7)

The Joint Committee considered approving the Environmental Policy Statement for Museums Worcestershire.

In the ensuing debate it was queried how it was proposed to improve energy conservation at the Commandery. The Senior Curator (Collections and Interpretation) stated that the existing heating system at the Commandery was very ineffective. It was recognised that the building could be heated in a more intelligent way and therefore specialist advice was being sought.

RESOLVED that the Environmental Policy Statement for Museums Worcestershire be approved.

255 Commandery Pricing Policy (Agenda item 8)

The Joint Committee considered proposals for changes to the Commandery Pricing Policy.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- The Marketing and Events Manager explained that as part of the review of the pricing policy at the Commandery, DCA Associates had been consulted and they had recommended an increase in price across all categories; the introduction of charging for Worcester City Council residents, though at a reduced rate and once only

in any one year; introduction of children go free; reduction in age related concessions; and the introduction of a Visitor Pass to include entry to multiple heritage attractions

- The Leader of Worcester City Council had indicated that the City Council would not be willing to support the introduction of charging for entry to the Commandery for Worcester City residents. An amendment was proposed (but not seconded) that this element of the pricing policy be removed from the recommendation
- An alternative view was expressed that it was not appropriate that Worcester City residents should be allowed free entry when other residents in the county were expected pay the full entry fee
- It might be appropriate to adopt the County Council's approach to its fees and charges policy which was an increase in fees and charges of inflation plus 2%
- How long had residents of Worcester City been admitted free of charge to the Commandery and when would the offer end? The Museums General Manager advised that free entry had been introduced as part of the last refurbishment funded by HLF to open up the building to the public. No commitment had been made as to how long the offer would be available to Worcester City residents
- In response to a query, the Museums General Manager explained that the proposals to increase fees and charges had emerged from recommendations made in the reports prepared by Blue Sail and DCA Associates as consultants. As part of their investigations, the fees and charges of other historic buildings of a similar nature had been examined. Even with the proposed increase in charges, the pricing policy was cheaper than most. Eventually it was anticipated that an entry fee of £7 for adults would be recommended, consistent with the market rate
- Officers needed to review the proposals further in light of the debate and in particular a decision by Worcester City Council was required before Members of the Joint Committee would be in a position to agree any proposals to increase fees and charges. Consideration should therefore be deferred until the next meeting of the Joint Committee in March 2016.

RESOLVED that consideration of the proposed

256 Shared Service Review (Agenda item 9)

level of fees and charges be deferred until the next meeting of the Joint Committee on 9 March 2016.

The Joint Committee considered a review of the shared service arrangements.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- The Head of Community and Environment stated that it was important to understand the consequences of the change of host authority on the VAT arrangements for Hartlebury before proceeding with the change
- In response to a query, the Museums General Manager explained that the City and County Councils had separate IT systems and as a result of the proposed change of host authority, work would need to be undertaken to enable the shared service to access the City Council's system
- The Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee should be consulted on the proposals prior to consideration by the Member Authorities.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the requirements for implementing a change in the hosting arrangements be noted;**
- b) the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee be consulted on the proposals prior to consideration by the Member Authorities; and**
- c) the relevant officers be requested to develop proposals in advance of a report to both Member Authorities.**

257 Finance Report (Agenda item 10)

The Joint Committee considered the financial position of the joint museums service.

In the ensuing debate, it was queried whether the £37k underspend would be put back into the joint service or the County Council's budget. The Head of Community and Environment (Worcestershire County Council) stated that the funds would be put back into the joint service's budget.

RESOLVED that the financial position of the joint

258 Performance and Planning - 2nd Quarter 2015-16 (Agenda item 11)

museums service as detailed in the report be noted.

The Joint Committee considered the performance and planning information provided for the 2nd quarter 2015-16.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were raised:

- The Museums General Manager highlighted that the key target "Objects for new Hartlebury Castle displays identified" had been given a Red RAG rating because it had not been possible to commission an exhibition designer to date. He hoped that this would be resolved by December 2015
- What was the reason the target to "Develop services for schools in the light of feedback" received a Red RAG rating? The Museums General Manager explained that the targeted action date of September 2015 had been missed hence the Red RAG rating. Work was in progress to align this with the forthcoming development of interpretation at the Commandery
- In developing the heritage marketing and related tourism opportunities, it was important not to duplicate existing work. The Museums General Manager advised that the service liaised closely with partner organisations to avoid duplication of effort.

RESOLVED that the performance and planning information provided for the 2nd quarter 2015-16 be noted.

259 Work Programme (Agenda item 12)

The Joint Committee considered its work programme.

In response to a query, the Museums General Manager indicated that the shared service would continue in its present form but with more developed relationships with other museums. In particular, attempts were being made assist smaller museums in the county.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 3.35pm

Chairman