

Joint Museums Committee

19 March 2015

5. SHARED SERVICE REVIEW

Recommendation

1. **The Museums General Manager recommends that:**
 - a) **the principle of a shared service review be approved; and**
 - b) **authority be delegated to the Head of Community and Environment (Worcestershire County Council and the Corporate Director – Service Delivery (Worcester City Council) to explore the issues set out in paragraph 6 a) - e) and to develop detailed proposals for further consideration by the Joint Committee.**

Background Information

2. Museums Worcestershire was established in April 2010 as a shared service managed by this joint committee, with delegated functions under powers provided by Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and Section 20 of the Local Government Act 2000. The activities of the joint committee and the scope of delegated functions were set out in a shared service partnership agreement in the same year.
3. In its first five years of operation, the shared service has recorded some major achievements and developments in service provision. We have:
 - Launched our Museum Futures campaign to plan and raise funds for capital projects
 - Secured funding and managed three tranches of training opportunities for local heritage organisations under the Skills for the Future programme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund
 - Secured funding for Museum Development and Museum on the Move for the period 2012-15
 - Worked with our partners the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust to secure a capital grant of £4.97 million from HLF in 2014
 - Increased grant aid and voluntary income from £3K to £235K in three years
 - Secured strategic funding support from the Arts Council on two occasions, a total of £261,600.

- Prepared the case for expansion to include other local authorities and devolution to a charitable trust
- Supported other local authorities planning a shared service approach
- Led the campaign for Citywide recognition of the value of Worcester's Civil War heritage
- Secured the acquisition of the Bredon Hill Hoard, the largest ever found in Worcestershire
- Managed museums that were visited by over 348,000 people over the last three years.

4. The original intention of both parties in moving to an arms-length operation was to prepare for the potential move towards charitable trust status. In its first three years the service devoted significant time to the exploration of the issues surrounding such a move, as well as a cost benefit analysis of an expansion of the service to include other local authority museums.

5. In the event, a decision was made not to proceed with these initiatives and for the remaining period until now, Museums Worcestershire has concentrated at a strategic level on making the case for investment in its sites, on securing strategic funding from the Arts Council and on making a cultural shift towards marketing and the visitor economy as a key driver of activity. This approach was confirmed in the new strategic plan for the period to 2018, approved by this joint committee in November 2014. (Minute no. 202 refers)

6. Over the course of five years, the service has had to respond to financial and other pressures which have had an impact on the terms of the original partnership agreement. These factors include:

- a) The reduction in funding from both Councils, in particular the pace and timing of changes.
- b) Pressures on support services at the host authority
- c) The impact of new management arrangements at Hartlebury
- d) Shared premises with Worcester City Council at the Museum and Art Gallery
- e) Collections management and storage pressures.

7. The partnership agreement states that "The Joint Committee shall from time to time review the operation of this Agreement and the means by which the functions (or any of them) delegated to the Joint Committee are performed ...". It is proposed therefore that the committee approve in principle a process of review to address the issues set out at paragraph

6. a)-e).

Contact Points

Specific Contact Point for this report:

Iain Rutherford, Museums General Manager
(01905) 361827/361821
Email: IRutherford@worcestershire.gov.uk

Background Papers

In the opinion of the Museums General Manager the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Museums Shared Service Partnership Agreement

Agenda papers and Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2014