

Joint Museums Committee
Friday, 22 September 2017, Randall Room, Guildhall,
Worcester - 2.00 pm

Present:

Minutes

Mr M Johnson (Chairman), Mrs L Denham,
Mrs L C Hodgson, and Ms K J May

Phillipa Tinsley, Interim Museums General Manager
(Museums Worcestershire)

Helen Large, Marketing and Events Manager (Museums
Worcestershire)

Philippa Smith, Deputy Director for Economic
Development and Planning (Worcester City Council)

Sonia Matthews, Principal Accountant (Worcestershire
County Council)

David Sutton, Deputy Director for Commissioning
(Worcester City Council)

Debbie Birch – External consultant

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 June 2017
(previously circulated).

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

None.

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

Mrs L Denham declared an interest as Chair of the Fort
Royal Hill and Commandery Gardens.

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

Further to Minute no. 316, members were informed that
green flag status had now been achieved for Fort Royal
Park and Commandery Gardens.

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held
on 21 June be confirmed a correct record subject to
the following amendment to the resolution to Minute

327 Museums Joint Service Hosting (Agenda item 4)

no. 317 – Shared Service Hosting Review:

- (c) there are currently no plans to change the governance arrangements for a further 12 months.**

The Joint Committee considered proposals for a switch of the hosting arrangements of the Joint Committee.

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

- It was important to remember that, whoever acted as host, the Museums Service had a role in providing support to all museums in the county
- The appointment of the Interim Museums General Manager should be extended to oversee the work associated with the switch of hosting to the end of August 2018
- The concerns expressed by the County Council about the cost of the switch of hosting arrangements needed to be addressed
- The switch of hosting arrangements should proceed in a seamless fashion without any impact on the service provided to the customer
- In response to a query, Philippa Tinsley explained that 65 individual members of staff would be affected by the TUPE arrangements
- In response to a query about the tax implications of the switch of hosting, Philippa Tinsley stated that the ability to exclude VAT from fees and charges depended upon the VAT threshold of the organisation. Hartlebury had always been able to exclude VAT from its charge on this basis. The City Council had never been able to make a claim because its VAT threshold was not high enough. The possibility of claiming a cultural exemption to exclude VAT for the Commandery was worth pursuing after the switch of hosting arrangements. Debbie Birch added that external advice should be sought to understand the VAT implications of the switch. The possibility of a cultural exemption for the Commandery was being explored
- In response to a query, Debbie Birch advised that the main issue would be reaching an agreement over the loss of income (approximately £10k per annum) rather than the hosting fee. It was added that the main issue for the County Council would be the impact of the loss of income on other budgets
- David Sutton commented that whatever approach

was agreed, it needed to be made clear what the financial implications were for both councils

- Throughout this process, it should be remembered that the councils would remain partners and continue to work together
- A member of the Joint Committee suggested that in the interim period a report should go to the City Council's Communities Committee to explain the rationale for change in terms of the benefits to the City Council. A similar report should go to the County Council's Cabinet explaining that the switch was not a takeover of the service by the City Council
- David Sutton queried whether it was necessary to take a report to the Communities Committee at this stage as it would be more appropriate to wait until the business case had been completed
- It was recommended that both councils be requested to carry out the necessary investigative work to facilitate the switch in hosting.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the process and timescale for a decision on whether to switch hosting of the Joint Museums Service (Museums Worcestershire) from Worcestershire County Council to Worcester City Council be agreed as set out in paragraph 15;**
- b) the progress to date on costs and implications be noted, and a final business plan report be commissioned on behalf of the joint committee, as set out in paragraphs 8 to 14 of the report;**
- c) both councils be requested to carry out the necessary investigative work to facilitate the switch in hosting;**
- d) an additional meeting of the Joint Committee be scheduled in early January to receive the final report and decide whether to recommend the two councils to proceed with the switch in hosting; and**
- e) The Interim Museums General Manager secondment be extended in order to oversee the work associated with the switch in hosting to the end of August 2018.**

**328 Heritage
Marketing
Report (Agenda
item 5)**

The Joint Committee considered the Heritage Marketing Report.

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

- Aside from the revamped area of the Commandery, had officers received any feedback about the use of the rest of the building? People needed to be aware of other important historical events in Worcester, not just the Civil War. For example, the history of the use of the Commandery building itself. Helen Large acknowledged that more work needed to be undertaken in order to tell other relevant stories in the remaining museum space
- In response to a query, Helen Large advised that the merchandise on sale had been upgraded to reflect the improved offer at the Commandery
- The Church of the Latter Day Saints had links to the City and there was the potential to attract American visitors to the City who would wish to trace their ancestral heritage
- In response to a query about the future planned phases of the Commandery refurbishment, Philippa Tinsley commented that since the café and the shop had been improved, it might be possible to revisit the plans. However there needed to be an overarching aim to ensure that any changes led to an increase in visitor numbers. It had been initially proposed to move the café but that suggestion might be reviewed. Further plans would be brought back to the Joint Committee
- Unless action was taken soon, there was a danger that momentum for change at the Commandery would be lost
- How was the café performing following the changes to the Commandery? Philippa Tinsley advised that footfall had increased at the café. The operator of the café had met the three monthly sales target in the first month. The operator was also keen to be involved in evening events as well as extending the service into the winter months including January
- Helen Large indicated that a wedding service had been launched at the Commandery. Conversations were being held with the City Council about shared marketing arrangements with the Guildhall
- Had any further thought been given to reopening the Commandery in January? Philippa Tinsley

advised that the main reason for the closure in January was the temperature of the building. The performance of the new heating system would be assessed and the business case reappraised accordingly

- Did the wedding offer only include the ceremony itself? Helen Large responded that the offer included the whole wedding package. There were restrictions to the offer due of the nature of the building and this was made clear to potential customers
- Had space been set aside for temporary exhibitions in the Commandery? Philippa Tinsley advised that the initial plan was to move the café within the fabric of the building and the vacated space would then be used for temporary exhibitions.

RESOLVED that the progress made in delivering museums and heritage projects be noted.

**329 Finance Report
(Agenda item 6)**

The Joint Committee considered the financial position of the Joint Museums Service.

In the ensuing debate, Sonia Matthews explained that the County Council had introduced a new financial system which should provide more detailed monitoring information to the Joint Committee in the future. A more detailed breakdown of the projected outturn would be available for the next meeting.

RESOLVED that the financial position of the Joint Museums Service be noted.

**330 Performance
and Planning
1st Quarter
2017-18
(Agenda item 7)**

The Joint Committee considered the performance and planning information for the 1st Quarter 2017-18.

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

- The options appraisal for Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum that had been carried out some time ago should be revisited to see if any lessons could be learned to improve the offer in the future. Philippa Tinsley undertook to circulate the original report to members of the Joint Committee
- In response to a query, Philippa Tinsley commented that the nature of the lease arrangements at Hartlebury had impacted on the

ability of the service to bid for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund

- Had consideration been given to the provision of any specific services for Looked After Children? Philippa Tinsley responded that the joint service had recently hosted an event for Looked After Children at the Commandery. This event had made officers more aware of the needs of Looked After Children and the service would liaise with the County Council more closely in the future
- The reference in the Service Plan to improving health, volunteering and learning opportunities in local communities did not satisfactorily reflect the work that the Joint Committee could take in support of the City and County Councils Health and Well-being plans. Philippa Tinsley acknowledged that lines of communication needed to be opened with both councils in this respect
- The recognition of the important role of volunteers in the Service Plan was welcomed.

RESOLVED that the performance and planning information provided for the 1st quarter 2017-18 be noted.

331 Work programme (Agenda item 8)

The Joint Committee considered its future work programme.

Members noted that a special meeting would need to be arranged in January 2018 and that the March 2018 meeting would be held at Hartlebury Museum.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 3.35pm.

Chairman