

Joint Museums Committee**Monday, 22 September 2014, 2.00 pm, County Hall,
Worcester, WR5 2NP****Present:****Minutes**

Mrs L C Hodgson (Worcestershire County Council
(Chairman)
Mr A N Blagg (Worcestershire County Council), and
Mr D Wilkinson (Worcester City Council)

Officers

Iain Rutherford, Museums General Manager (Museums
Worcestershire)
Helen Large, Marketing and Events Manager (Museums
Worcestershire)
Wendy Pickering, Principal Finance Officer
(Worcestershire County Council)
Neil Anderson, Head of Cultural and Community Services
(Worcestershire County Council)
Mike Worsnop, Head of Safer and Stronger Communities
(Worcester City Council)
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 26 June 2014
(previously circulated).

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

None.

**190 Apologies/Decla
 rations of
 Interest
 (Agenda item 2)**

An apology was received from Mr A Roberts.

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

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on
26 June 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and
signed by the Chairman.

192 Museums

The Joint Committee considered authorising a new

Worcestershire Plan (Agenda item 4)

Museums Worcestershire Plan for 2015-18.

The current strategic plan for Museums Worcestershire was approved in 2011, to cover the period from 2011-14. It was therefore time for a review of the plan in order to chart a course for the medium term.

The previous plan drew attention to the considerable uncertainties for the service surrounding the future of Hartlebury and the ground floor of the City Art Gallery and Museum building. Both matters were now close to resolution and this would help to dictate a direction for the service and give more certainty about future operational matters.

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

- Officers might find it useful to liaise with the County Council's Head of Learning and Achievement to ascertain the most appropriate way to develop services for schools
- Had representatives of the joint service been invited to take part in the City Council's scrutiny exercise in relation to Tourism? The Marketing and Events Manager commented that members serving on the Scrutiny Panel had been invited to a Stakeholders meeting. In addition, Arts Council documents were being used as reference material for the scrutiny exercise
- At some point, the Joint Committee should take a view on the potential alternative venues for the Museum and Art Gallery. In response it was commented that this Joint Committee needed to be made aware of the details before drawing any conclusions. It was therefore agreed that a presentation be made to the next Joint Committee meeting
- Was the Joint Committee satisfied that the Heritage Development Report had received sufficient consideration and what was the expected contribution from the City Council? The Museums General Manager commented that the report had been used as a key document for the basis of the work of the service. The difficulty was determining who would be the lead organisation. The consultant's view was that it needed to be a collaborative approach. A request had been made for a copy of the document be circulated to all members of the City Council
- Would members of the Joint Committee wish to

see the move of the service to Trust status remain as a key aim within the Plan? In response, it was commented that from the establishment of the Shared Service, the assumption had always been that the service would eventually obtain trust status. Were there any issues that would prevent it happening and therefore warrant removal of its reference from the plan? The Museums General Manager stated that there were 2 issues related to the formation of a Trust: accountability and finance. It was recognised that both Councils wanted to retain the option of handing over responsibility to a trust. The trustees on the board would be independent and would require a degree of certainty about the future status of the trust. The process came to a halt in 2012 because of the requirement for each council to make budgetary reductions. However the financial position of the councils might change in the future to make trust status a possibility. The City Council's Head of Safe and Stronger Communities added that for a trust to be successful, there would need to be a period of financial stability and a commitment from the participants to the principal of the trust status to allow the diversification of the income streams. Long term savings including taxation benefits could be made from establishing trust status but there would need to be a period of stability in the short-term before progress could be made. It was therefore agreed that Trust status should remain an aim in the Plan

- Had the concept of a national/regional store for documents been considered because there were considerable gains to be made in terms of cost savings, access rights and improved storage facilities of such arrangements? The Museums General Manager commented that the idea of a regional store had been raised in the past but, despite the financial and other benefits, it had not been possible to reach any agreement with other councils in the region over this matter.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the production of a new Museums Strategic Plan for 2015-18 be authorised; and**
- b) a presentation on the future of the Museum and Art Gallery be made to the next meeting of the Committee on 17 November 2014.**

193 Museum and Art Gallery - building changes (Agenda item 5)

The Joint Committee considered a report on the forthcoming changes to the Museum and Art Gallery building.

Worcester City Council had decided to approve an alternative recommendation for its staff to move into the ground floor of the Museum and Art Gallery building following the sale of Orchard House. The City Council had requested that the Joint Committee considered alternative options for utilisation of the ground floor of the Museum and Art Gallery for the delivery of the Transformation Plan.

Advice had been sought from the National Security Advisor to make sure all changes to the building and its procedures did not jeopardise the Art Gallery's Government Indemnity status. This in turn allowed for the loan of works from the national collections, the only space in the whole County which could receive such collections and display them to the public.

The main accommodation changes were:

- Museum staff to vacate offices and a workshop on the ground floor
- The creation of a new office on the first floor as part of the contract
- The surrender of the museum committee room on the ground floor as a public space available for lettings – this would now become the main meeting room for the building
- Creation of new offices, toilets and a kitchen on the ground floor for City Council staff.

The shop and café would continue to occupy the entrance and foyer. The impact on both and on the general operation of the building during the course of the contract would be minimised as far as possible but there would inevitably be some unavoidable disruption during the building work.

The City Council's offices required more extended opening hours and work was in progress to find the best solution to key holding and security matters. A review of facilities management contracts was also underway to avoid any duplication once the offices were ready for opening.

The first moves of City Council staff into the new location would take place in February 2015. A further progress report would be provided to the Joint Committee at that

point.

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

- In response to a query, the Museums General Manager acknowledged that there would be a reduction in income to the service from room hire and catering fees as a result of the loss of the meeting room at the MAG
- The service should not be expected to make more savings from its budget to cover this loss of income as a result of these changes. This was a matter that could legitimately be raised with the City Council because of the impact on the financial position of the shared service. The Museums General Manager added that there was also a one-off cost to the service as a result of the impact of the rearrangement of the physical space to move City Council staff into the building. He was in discussions with the City Council to address this matter
- A letter should be sent to the Portfolio holder with Responsibility for Safer and Stronger Communities at the City Council to express the Joint Committee's concerns about the impact on the budget of the Shared Service of the alterations to the MAG building.

RESOLVED that:

- a) the report on the forthcoming changes to the Museum and Art Gallery building be noted;**
- b) the principle that the loss of the meeting room should not impact on the shared services budget be accepted; and**
- c) the Museums General Manager be authorised to write to the City Council's Portfolio Holder for Safer and Stronger Communities to express the Joint Committee's concerns about the possible impact on the Shared Services budget of the changes to the Museum and Art Gallery building.**

**194 First World War
100th
Anniversary
Programme**

The Committee considered the Museums Worcestershire programme to mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War.

Museums Worcestershire had been part of a group of

(Agenda item 6)

heritage organisations in Worcestershire working together to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the First World War. With Worcestershire Archives as the lead applicant, the group submitted an application to the Heritage Lottery Fund and was successfully awarded £310,500.

Museums Worcestershire was awarded £107,000 to fund projects across the four years of commemoration. This would fund seven projects including exhibitions at all three Museums Worcestershire sites and family activities and outreach projects. It would also fund a part-time member of staff for part of the project duration. In addition, both the Worcestershire Regiment Museum Trust and the Worcestershire Yeomanry Museum Trust had been awarded grants to undertake small displays within the Worcestershire Soldier galleries at Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery relating to the key battles their regiments fought.

The first project had been a military-style bell-tent which had given the project a presence at many commemorative events this summer and autumn. The first large exhibition opens at Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery on 25 October. Bringing together loaned objects and documents from many different sources, it aims to tell the story of the early part of WW1 using the voices and experiences of Worcestershire people.

Future projects included family activities at Worcester City Museum & Art Gallery over November and Christmas; touring material and events relating to Vesta Tilley and an exhibition celebrating Hartlebury Castle's history as a Voluntary Aid Detachment hospital.

RESOLVED that the Museums Worcestershire programme to mark the 100th anniversary of the First World War be noted.

195 Heritage Marketing Report (Agenda item 7)

The Joint Committee considered the progress made in delivering museums and heritage marketing projects.

In the ensuing debate, it was queried whether following the successful use of the Guildhall for the set of the film "Father Brown", had the service been approached by other film crews to use the joint service's facilities. The Marketing and Events Manager advised that the Commandery had been considered for use as a backdrop for the film "Les Miserables". In general, the use of the joint service's facilities by film crews did provide a useful source of income.

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

**196 Finance Report
(Agenda item 8)**

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

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

- The Treasurer reported that a variance of £30,000 had been projected for the outturn budget 2014/15. This sum would be under-written through the County Council's Business, Environment and Community Directorate budget reserve. The Head of Culture and Community added that this was a longstanding commitment on the use of the reserve and the intention was that in the future, the use of this reserve would be phased out
- What was the reason for the increased salary costs for employees at the Hartlebury Cafe in the 4th quarter 2014/15? The Museums General Manager undertook to write to members of the Joint Committee with an explanation of this variation.

RESOLVED that the financial position of the joint museums service as detailed in the report be noted.

**197 Performance
report 1st
Quarter 2014-15
(Agenda item 9)**

The Joint committee considered the performance and planning information provided for the 1st quarter 2014-15.

The report indicated that the key points to note were:

- The visitor figures show increased visits at the City Museum and Art Gallery due to the pulling power of destination exhibitions like "Song of the Sea". Overall however there is a drop of 4% in the number of visits in person
- Online access shows a welcome increase with the number of virtual visits up by 7%. Museum on the Move has also attracted the largest number of users for the 1st quarter since 2010
- There has been significant additional work by the museum team to maintain or increase the number of events in the programme, as well as to respond to increasing numbers of enquiries. Some of the

larger events have, however, been dropped from the programme due to a reduction in staff and resources

- The finance indicators show strong retail spend for head with both the City Museum and Hartlebury showing the best quarter 1 figures for 5 years. Other ratios show a mixed picture reflecting seasonal variations and changes to the events programme at each site.

RESOLVED that the performance and planning information provided for the 1st quarter 2014-15 be noted.

198 Work Programme (Agenda item 10)

The Joint Committee considered its work programme.

In the ensuing debate, it was requested that arrangements be made to invite members of the City and County Council to visit the Hartlebury Store. Numbers would be limited and invitations made on a first come, first served basis.

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

The meeting ended at 3.40pm

Chairman