

**Joint Museums Committee**  
**Monday, 17 November 2014, 2.00 pm, County Hall,**  
**Worcester**

**Present:**

**Minutes**

Mrs L C Hodgson (Worcestershire County Council)  
(Chairman)  
Mr A N Blagg (Worcestershire County Council),  
Mr A Roberts (Worcester City 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)  
Ruth Mullen, The Corporate Director – Service Delivery  
(Worcester City Council)  
Mike Worsnop, Head of Safer and Stronger Communities  
(Worcester City Council)  
Simon Lewis, Committee Officer (Worcestershire County  
Council)

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

None.

**Available papers**

The Members had before them:

- A. The Agenda papers (previously circulated); and
- B. The Minutes of the meeting held on 22 September  
2014 (previously circulated).

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

None.

**201 Confirmation of**

**RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held**

**Minutes  
(Agenda item 3)**

**on 22 September 2014 be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.**

**202 Museums  
Worcestershire  
Strategic Plan  
2015-18  
(Agenda item 4)**

The Joint Committee considered the Museums Worcestershire Strategic Plan for 2015-18.

The report indicated that 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 creation of annual action plans would follow to develop a more detailed work programme.

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

- In relation to museum development, how did the service provide support for smaller museums in the county? The Marketing and Events Manager explained that support was provided on an as needed basis as well as through the Heritage Group
- Although it was not wholly museum based, the TSE Report was a useful document and members of the Joint Committee would benefit from reading it. It was agreed that the TSE Report would be circulated electronically to members of the Committee.

**RESOLVED that the Museums Worcestershire Strategic Plan for 2015-18 be approved.**

**203 Hartlebury  
Grant Award  
(Agenda item 5)**

The Joint Committee received an update on the Hartlebury Grant Award.

The report indicated that at the beginning of October, the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust (HCPT), with partners Worcestershire County Council (WCC) and Museums Worcestershire (MW), learnt of a successful award of £4.97 million by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

This would enable the Trust to buy Hartlebury Castle with its surrounding 43 acres of parkland and embark on programmes for conservation and activities. The principle behind the scheme was that the Trust and Museums Worcestershire would make the Castle, Hurd Library, collections of the Museum and Castle, as well as Gardens into an integrated visitor destination that would benefit the local area and serve as a major attraction for

visitors from around the UK and beyond.

Work on a range of refurbishment and restoration projects to improve both the building and access to the grounds would commence in 2015, with work planned to be completed by the summer of 2017.

This was a complex project requiring not only the management of a programme of capital works but significant changes to the way Hartlebury was managed and developed in future. Discussions were at a very early stage on the detail of agreements between the parties and the implications for shared service operations. A further report would follow once the details had been established.

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

- The Museums General Manager commented that the offer letter from the Heritage Lottery Fund was awaited. The offer letter would set out the terms of the contract. It was anticipated that work would begin on the first phase of the development in the new year which would include the creation of an admission point and a new catering offer. He anticipated that a report would need to be brought to a future Joint Committee meeting in relation the governance arrangements for the project
- Would the funding for the project be released by HLF in a lump sum or would the finances be drawn down as the project progressed? The Museums General Manager advised that special arrangements would apply to the funding required for acquisition. The remainder of the funds would need to be drawn down retrospectively as the project progressed. The Head of Community and Environment added that the project was being linked to the County Council's World Class Worcestershire objective. He proposed that a visit by members of the Joint Committee be arranged in the new year.

**RESOLVED that the success of the Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust, Worcestershire County Council and Museums Worcestershire in securing £4.97 from the Heritage Lottery Fund be noted.**

The Joint Committee considered forthcoming changes to the museum development programme.

**(Agenda item 6)**

Museum development was a longstanding programme now funded by the Arts Council to support museums across the UK.

In the West Midlands the scheme had been administered by the Marches Network, a partnership of museums in the counties of Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Warwickshire, Staffordshire and Shropshire, and Wolverhampton Arts and Museums Service.

Funding for the current programme ended in March 2015. The Marches Network partners had worked with Ironbridge Gorge Museum Trust to submit a successful bid to the Arts Council to continue the programme from April 2015. This would require some changes to the management and distribution of museum development officers and these proposals were currently being developed.

**RESOLVED that the forthcoming changes to the museum development programme be noted.**

**205 Restructure proposals (Agenda item 7)**

The Joint Committee considered a request to delegate authority to agree the final proposals for staff restructuring following the completion of staff consultation.

Following a review and consultation with visitors it was proposed that the changes to opening hours least likely to impact on the public would be for the Commandery to close on Mondays and throughout the month of January.

The initial plan was for the business case to be completed and the results of staff consultation to be available by the date of this meeting. Unfortunately the timetable had slipped and although staff consultation had begun, the consultation period did not close until 5 December.

The intention was to implement the Monday closing proposal from February 2015 and for the staff changes to be introduced from the beginning of the next financial year. Closing the building during the month of January would be implemented from 2016. Given the next Joint Committee meeting was on the 19 March 2015, it was necessary to request that delegated authority be granted to the Museums General Manager in consultation with the Chairman and Vice Chairman to approve the final proposals in order to keep to this timetable.

In the ensuing debate, the following principal points were

**206 Heritage marketing report (Agenda item 8)**

raised:

- The Corporate Director – Services Delivery (Worcester City Council) commented that it was not unusual for heritage sites to close during January as it allowed the service to refresh exhibitions and undertake maintenance work
- Although the principle of January closing was supported, officers should give consideration to closing the Commandery during the quiet period post new year after schools had reopened.

**RESOLVED that the Museums General Manager be authorised in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman of the Joint Committee to agree the final proposals for staff restructuring following the completion of staff consultation.**

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

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

- How much was the bid to the Magna Carta 800<sup>th</sup> Committee to fund the Commandery's Year of Liberty and Democracy programme and why was the bid unsuccessful? The Marketing and Events Manager explained that a bid of £10,000 had been submitted. The overall pot of funds available for bidding had been £200,000 and the Committee had received bids totalling £700,000. Given the competition for the funding and the fact that the service's bid was related to the Civil War, the result was not unexpected. In response to a query, she added that other sources of funding for the programme were being explored
- Concern was expressed that B W Leader was not of sufficient artistic standing to attract large attendances. The Marketing and Events Manager stated that B W Leader was recognised by Visit England as an important landscape painter and provided an important link into the national landscape collection
- Could arrangements be made for works by Turner to be taken on loan, perhaps from private collectors in the county? The Museums General Manager commented that he was not aware of paintings by Turner in private ownership in the county. However both Turner and Constable had visited the county during their lifetimes and it was

intended to consider ways of linking this connection into future activities.

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

**207 Finance report  
(Agenda item 9)**

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

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

- The Head of Community and Environment explained that it had been recognised by the County Council through its Future Fit programme that it was more cost-effective to keep the museums service open rather than mothball it
- Was it intended that Hartlebury Café would operate without subsidy in the future? The Museums General Manager explained that from next year the café would lose its subsidy. The plans for the Hartlebury project included proposals to move the café outside the pay zone thereby enabling access by a wider range of customers and as a result increasing takings and profitability
- It was agreed that a comparison of employee costs against total spend should be provided in future reports.

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

**208 Performance report - 2nd quarter 2014-15  
(Agenda item 10)**

The Joint Committee considered the performance of the joint museums service for the 2nd quarter 2014-15.

The report indicated that the key points to note were:

- There was an overall dip in summer attendance at the Art Gallery and Museum due to the nature of the exhibition this year Fancy Pants – A Celebration of Style, compared with the equivalent show in 2013, Secret Egypt, which had a much greater appeal for families during the school holidays
- Attendances at the Commandery increased by 18%, reflecting the increase in activities and exhibitions and corresponding promotional activities
- Figures for Hartlebury dropped by 5%, due in part to the reductions in the scale of the event

programme but again increased in September by 6% on the year before

- Hartlebury's Transport Day saw a 13% increase in visitors and a 55% increase in shop/admissions and a 12% increase in the Café
- Heritage Open Day also saw an increase in visitors at Hartlebury - 741 this year compared to 483 last year, some of this was due to an increased social media presence for the event
- Reports from elsewhere in the region suggested that visits to museums in urban areas suffered particularly during the very good weather over the summer
- There had been a substantial increase in enquiries to the collections team
- The number of visits by children and young people had dropped

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

- Did the poor weather over the Bank Holiday period have a significant effect on visitor numbers at the Commandery? The Marketing and Events Manager commented that the weather was particularly poor over that period and had an impact on both the Commandery and Hartlebury Museum. It was anticipated that the impact of poor weather on visitor numbers would be reduced in the future with the alteration to the offer at both sites to provide an indoor and outdoor experience
- Future performance indicators should include the cumulative total to date
- What was the reason for the increase in visitor numbers and was it achieved as a result of increased expenditure? The Museums General Manager explained that there had been an increased range of activities focussed on the Civil War provided during this period. No additional expenditure had been incurred during this period, aside from additional staff time
- The Marketing and Events Manager confirmed that the pop-up café had had a positive effect on visitor numbers
- How was it intended to improve the link between the outdoor and indoor offer? The Marketing and Events Manager advised that work was underway with Worcester Bid to create information points across the City which would provide real-time information and promote events.

**209 Work programme (Agenda item 11)**

**RESOLVED** that the performance and planning information for the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2014-15 be noted.

The Joint Committee considered its work programme.

In the ensuing debate, it was confirmed that the meeting of the Joint Committee originally scheduled on 4 March 2015 would now be held on Thursday, 19 March 2015 at 10am (Venue to be determined).

**RESOLVED** that the work programme be noted.

**Exclusion of Public and Press**

**RESOLVED** that pursuant to Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public shall be excluded from the meeting during the consideration of the following items on the grounds that there would be disclosure to them of information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding the information) and the public interest in maintaining the exemption outweighs the public interest in disclosing the information.

**Summary of the proceedings of the meeting during which the press and public were excluded.**

**210 The future of the Museum and Art Gallery, Worcester (Agenda item 12)**

The Committee agreed to recommend to Worcester City Council to proceed to the next stage of realisation of plans for the future of the Museum and Art Gallery.

The meeting ended at 3.35pm

Chairman .....