

**JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE  
7 JUNE 2016**

**COMMANDERY DEVELOPMENT**

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**Recommendation**

- 1. The Museums General Manager recommends that:**
  - a) The outline design proposals for the Commandery be approved; and**
  - b) He be granted delegated authority to develop a cost plan for approval by Worcester City Council as the commissioning organisation.**

**Background**

2. On 19 March 2015, the Joint Committee supported the draft proposals for the redevelopment of the Commandery and recommended to the City Council that the scheme should proceed to the next stage of realisation. (Minute no. 218 refers) The scheme was based on an analysis of the potential of the City's Civil War heritage to drive forward the tourism agenda, originally commissioned in 2013 with funding from Arts Council England.
3. On 10 June 2015 a detailed development and business plan produced by DCA Associates was presented to the Joint Committee, assessing the impact of proposals on the long term operation and viability of the Commandery. (Minute no. 232 refers) The next steps in moving forward included the appointment of an exhibition designer and further work to identify the property requirements.
4. The City Council's Cabinet agreed to an investment of up to £260,000 on 28 July 2015 and authorised further discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund on the potential for a grant to support the project, acknowledging that a phased approach was necessary to complete the scheme in full.
5. In September 2015, the Joint Committee then endorsed the steps needed to begin work on the Commandery's marketing strategy, an essential component of the campaign to reposition the building to sit at the heart of Worcester's tourism offer as the "Civil War City". (Minute no. 243)
6. For the years 2015-17, Museums Worcestershire was awarded £129,100 by Arts Council England for a range of museum resilience projects. This included the appointment of independent fundraisers to help drive forward a fundraising campaign. This appointment has now been made and after a mapping phase the service is working on several approaches to increase the potential investment available to the Commandery development, including a bid to HLF. Further fundraising may be required subject to the conclusions of the cost plan and the final phasing of the project.

7. Funding for the scheme has already increased with the support of £50,000 from Worcestershire County Council and £28,504 from the West Midlands Museum Development Capital Grants Scheme. Capital elements of the project are being channelled through City Council procurement and a project manager from the City Council is supporting the process.

8. This report deals specifically with the exhibition design phase of the project. Following a tender process, exhibition designers GuM were appointed in 2016 and they have been working with the Museums Worcestershire Team to produce some outline designs for the development of the site.

9. Their brief for the exhibition designers is to:

- a. Devise and design displays potentially including high and low-tech interactives and participatory elements, dramatic sound and light, key significant objects, and image and text-based visual information, for two key areas of The Commandery building:
  - A Civil War experience over nine rooms in the Garden Wing
  - The street window and site entrance, enticing visitors into the building
- b. Devise and design a high or low-tech trail interpreting the other Battle of Worcester sites around the city of Worcester, with The Commandery as the trail hub;
- c. Using the new brand guidelines that are being created as part of this project, design navigational signage for the whole Commandery site;
- d. Devise and design displays potentially including high and low-tech interactives and participatory elements, dramatic sound and light, key significant objects, and image and text-based visual information, for two phase 2 areas of The Commandery building:
  - The Presidents Room, bringing the visit of Thomas Jefferson and John Adams to life
  - The Great Hall, introducing the building throughout its history
- e. These phase 2 areas designs should initially be for submission to grant funders and then, following successful funding applications, to completion;
- f. Work from Museums Worcestershire's interpretation plan for each space, and the key findings from Morris Hargreaves McIntyre's audience research (*This Really Happened Here*, March 2014) and TSE Research's review of Worcester's Civil War product (*English Civil War in Worcestershire*, January 2014, *Heritage Product Development* April 2014 and *Strengthening Museums and the Visitor Economy in Worcester*, March 2014);
- g. Liaise with key Museums Worcestershire staff regarding the stories, research and objects to include in the new displays;

- h. Liaise with Property Services staff and the City's Conservation Officer on any physical changes required and advise on requirements prior to any application for Listed Building consent; and
- i. Advise Museums Worcestershire on the best contractors to complete the display build, and assist Worcester City Council with the contracting process by providing appropriate specifications of each element to be commissioned or purchased.

10. A presentation of the proposals in response to this brief will be provided to members of the committee. If the plans are endorsed, a cost plan will then be developed for submission to Worcester City Council as the host and funding agency for this project.

11. The next steps if approved will involve a detailed design and tender stage, to appoint contractors to implement the scheme in readiness for a launch in early summer 2017.

## **Contact Points**

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### Specific Contact Points for this report

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## **Background Papers**

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Museums General Manager) the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

Joint Museum Committee Agenda papers and Minutes - 19 March 2015 and 10 June 2015;

City Council Cabinet Agenda papers and Minutes - 28 July 2015