

7. MUSEUM AND ART GALLERY FEASIBILITY STUDY

Recommendation

1. The Museums General Manager recommends that:

- a) the report from DCA Consultants on an Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study for the Museum and Art Gallery be received; and**
- b) the report be referred to Worcester City Council, as owners of the Museum and Art Gallery building, for further consideration.**

Background Information

2. In September 2013, the Joint Committee received a presentation on an options appraisal which had been triggered by the move of the City Library from Foregate Street to a new purpose built facility at the Hive. The move left the ground floor of the Foregate Street building vacant and although temporary programmes had been put in place, a more permanent solution to the issue was required.

3. DCA Consultants of Birmingham had been appointed in June 2013 to carry out the study. Following presentation of their initial findings on the options available, the Joint Committee recommended that the consultants draw up a business plan for the use of the lower floor of the Museum and Art Gallery based on the concept of a children's museum. (Minute no. 151 refers)

4. The final report is attached, divided into Part 1 which reviews all the options set out in the original brief and Part 2 which assesses the feasibility of the Children's Museum proposal.

5. The feasibility study identifies the key considerations in the installation of a Children's Museum or Gallery in the space, addresses the size and nature of the market, visitor numbers and pricing, architectural considerations and costs and potential funding.

The conclusions of the consultants are set out below:

As discussed at options appraisal stage, we believe that there is a highly attractive, viable and noteworthy scheme in the development of a children's gallery in the ground floor of the Museum and Art Gallery, coupled with a refurbishment and refresh of the Museum and Art Gallery upstairs.

Supporting Information

Contact Points

Background Papers

For the Council and the service, this would place Worcester at the forefront of a movement in this country to make special provision for children and families and to engage schools in heritage through creativity.

With capital investment in the main part provided by others, the Council would secure a viable and positive use for the currently underused building, generating economic and social benefits for the City and at the same time reduce the net cost of the current building by between £67,000 and £97,000 per annum.

The next steps, if the Council chose to pursue the scheme, would be to report to and secure the support of Arts Council England who have part funded the work in options appraisal and feasibility study, and to approach Heritage Lottery Fund for first discussion of the project with the West Midlands regional office.

6. The report paints a picture of an exciting new attraction for Worcester that would also address the budgetary pressures faced by the museum service over the next three years. There are however a number of other options still under consideration by the City Council. It is therefore recommended that the Committee refer the report to the City Council for further consideration at this stage.

Appendix - Options Appraisal and Feasibility Study for the Future of the Museum and Art Gallery – Final Report
February 2014

Specific Contact Point for this report:

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

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

Application for Renaissance strategic support fund – Arts Council 2012