

**JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE
9 NOVEMBER 2016**

COMMANDERY FEES AND CHARGES

Recommendation

1. **The Museums General Manager recommends that:**
 - a) **the Joint Museums Committee consider the pricing options for the Commandery as set out below;**
 - b) **pricing proposals be recommended to Worcester City Council as part of the fees and charges for 2017-18; and**
 - c) **he be granted delegated authority in consultation with the Chairman and Vice-Chairman to decide on the timing of the introduction of new charges for weddings and room hire.**

Background

2. On 25 October the City Council's Cabinet approved a revised phasing and cost plan for the Commandery development and gave authority to proceed with phases 1 and 2, the latter subject to a successful bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund.
3. The proposals were originally based on an outline business plan by DCA Associates, previously approved by this Joint Committee in March 2015. Initial plans to amend fees and charges in response to the original business plan and an understanding of the new offer at the Commandery were considered by this Joint Committee in November 2015 and a decision was deferred. The development of the project in the current year, including the creation of a new master plan and additional funding secured from external organisations, has provided a new focus for reconsidering the fees and charges for the Commandery following the relaunch.
4. The setting of fees and charges is not a function delegated to the Joint Committee under the shared services partnership agreement dated April 2010. The agreement does specify however that any decisions on excluded powers, including the setting of fees and charges, should be made by the member authorities in the light of a recommendation from the Joint Committee.

Original recommendations

5. The work by DCA Associates included a review of a pricing plan commissioned from Blue Sail with financial assistance from Arts Council England, in 2013-14. A copy of the original pricing plan is attached to this report. The building's marketing strategy identifies the importance of the following:

- The Commandery should directly target family, boomer and educational segments living within a 45-60 minute travel time.
- The Commandery should work in partnership to reach tourism markets (day trippers and staying visitors, including VFRs)
- The focus on the Battle of Worcester presents an opportunity to target a specialist market too
- There is potential to work in partnership with other heritage attractions in the City, including the Cathedral and Greyfriars.

6. The modelling of additional income potential by DCA suggested that an additional £46K in admissions income, excluding VAT, would be achievable, with growth to £59K up to 3 years after opening, if the principle of an increase in charges was adopted as set out in their report.

7. The City Council has proposed through its medium term financial plan that Museums Worcestershire achieve a further £95k reduction in operating subsidy over the next two financial years – changes to fees and charges would therefore help in meeting this requirement, with the balance to come from other sources of income and operational efficiencies in 2018-19.

Admission charges

8. Pricing strategies have a significant role to play for museums in raising income, particularly at a time of pressure on public finances, but it is also important that pricing is not perceived as a barrier to access, learning and enjoyment of the City's heritage. Admission charges also need to be competitive and represent value for money; the significant levels of investment in the Commandery refurbishment now provide an opportunity to review the current levels of charging and to make changes to meet current circumstances and future funding gaps.

9. The pricing plan endorsed by DCA recommended the following options:

- An increase in price across all categories
- Introduction of charging for Worcester City Council residents, though at a reduced rate and once only in any one year, allowing any number of repeat visits
- Introduction of children go free offer
- A reduction in age related concessions
- Introduction of a Visitor Pass to include entry to multiple heritage attractions.

10. The above principles if adopted would suggest the following price structure. The proposal below would only be introduced upon completion of phase 1 of the improved visitor offer.

Admission Charges	Current £	Proposed £	See note
Adults	5.50	5.95	
Adult Concession	4.50	4.95	1
Students 17+	4.50	4.95	
Child	2.50	Free	2
Worcester Residents	Free	5.00	3
Season Ticket (Adult)	6.00	10.95	4
Season Ticket (Concession)	6.00	9.95	5
Group Adult (10 people)	4.50	5.95	6
Group Concession (10 people)	3.50	4.95	7
School Visits – Includes 3 workshops and Audio Guide	4.50	4.50	
School Visits – Extra workshop or City Walk	6.00	6.00	
Drop-in activities (in addition to admission fee)	2 – 5.00	2 – 5.00	

1. In receipt of State pension in line with City Council policy
2. Each paying adult can bring up to 3 children in free of charge
3. To be renewed annually, gives free entry for the year
4. Entitles holder to Free entry for the rest of the year (includes first admission)
5. Entitles holder to Free entry for the rest of the year (includes first admission)
6. One Free admission per group (i.e. 9 + 1) and an introductory talk
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11. Further work has been done to compare these recommended prices with other heritage sites in the County. The following table provides some benchmarks for comparative venues:

PRICE COMPARISONS ADMISSION CHARGES TO COMPARABLE VENUES IN WORCESTER AND THE REGION 2016

	Adult	Concession	Child to 16 or 18	Family 2+2 or 2+3
Commandery*	£5.50	£4.50	£2.50	£13.00
Greyfriars NT	£5.50 / £5.00	n/a	£2.75 / £2.50	£13.75 / £12.50
Hartlebury	£5.00	£2.50	£2.50	£13.00
Elgar Birthplace Museum	£7.50	£6.50	£3.50	£15.00
Royal Worcester Porcelain Museum	£6.00	£5.00	free	£12.00
Croome NT	£11.50 / £10.45	n/a	£5.70 / £5.15	£28.70 / £26.05
Little Malvern Court	£8.00	n/a	£3.00	n/a
Kenilworth Castle EH	£11.20 / £10.10	£10.10 / £9.10	£6.70 / £6.00	£29.10 / £26.20
Spetchley Park Gardens	£7.00	£6.50	£2.50	£17.00

Charges in bold = Gift-aid price

12. Further work on a multi-site visitor pass will be carried out in 2017, with partners, in readiness for a further report for the next round of fees and charges. Members of the committee are asked to consider the proposed options and proposals for admission prices in section 10 above, as part of the review of fees and charges to be conducted by the City Council for 2017-18.

Weddings and Private Hire

13. The DCA study also included a review of the potential for the development of a weddings package at the Commandery. The proposals have been reviewed more recently by the in house team in the light of new plans for the building's layout. Advice has also been sought from the County Council's Registration Service and charges for equivalent venues have been researched in order to identify a competitive range of charges. The following charges are proposed:

Great Hall, Wedding Suite and Wedding Garden Accommodates up to 70 people from 3pm onwards

Package 1	Ceremony & Photographs – 3 hours	£950
	<i>Drinks can be provided at an extra charge p.p. price dependant on drink required</i>	
Package 2	Ceremony, Photographs and Reception (between 3pm – 8pm)	£1,500
Package 3	Ceremony, Photographs, Reception & Evening Hire (between 3pm – 11pm)	£2,000
Package 4	Wedding Reception only (between 5pm-9pm)	£950
Package 5	Evening Reception only (between 7pm – 11pm)	£1,100

Wedding Suite and Wedding Garden (Food Room or Games Room for Ceremony) Accommodates up to 25 people at any time

Package 1	Ceremony & Photographs – 3 hours	£700
	<i>Drinks can be provided at an extra charge p.p. price dependant on drink required</i>	
Package 2	Include a Wedding Breakfast or Evening Reception in the Great Hall (or Marquee extra charge)	£550 - £1050

- *Discount of 20% Sunday-Thursday (except Bank Holidays/late availabilities). Late availabilities are offered within 3 months.*
- *25% non-refundable deposit required at time of booking, balance to be paid 12 weeks in advance.*
- *All timings include set up time*

Great Hall or Wedding Suite for other Celebrations

Between 5pm – 9pm	£950
Between 7pm – 11pm	£1100
Outside of the above times	By negotiation
Whole Site (Paranormal evenings etc.)	£180 per hour
Corporate Room Hire – various room (includes equipment hire)	£70 per hour
Garden Hire	£70 per hour

14. The projected income for weddings and room hire is estimated to rise from its base of £9,500 in 2016-17 to £34,400 by 2019-20 on the basis of these charges.

15. The timetable for the introduction of the full offer will depend on progress with the main building works and the success of an application to the Resilient Heritage Fund. The bid will need to set out the financial impact of a Weddings and Private Hire Service from its current base, hence the need to identify charges now. The joint committee is therefore asked to approve these charges in principle and to delegate authority on the timing of the introduction of wedding hire charges in 2017-18 to the Chairman and Vice Chairman.

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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:

Pricing Plan for the Commandery (Blue Sail March 2014)