

CABINET

Town Hall Tours 29th March 2016

Report of Chief Officer, Regeneration and Planning

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To propose new arrangements for Town Hall tours in Lancaster Town Hall.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision	Referral from Cabinet Member	
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision	22 February 2016			
This report is public				

OFFICER RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that

- (1) **Cabinet approves the proposals outlined in this report for development and delivery of Town Hall tours at Lancaster Town Hall**

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Lancaster Town Hall is an important heritage building with an interesting history that spans over a century. Over the last couple of years a significant amount of work has been undertaken to repair and maintain the building in a way that is appropriate for its Grade 2* listed status. As a result, public access to various parts of the building has been restricted for some time. Although further works are planned but unprogrammed at this stage, the current phase of the repairs and maintenance works is now almost complete creating a better opportunity to open up the building more regularly for the public and visitors.

1.2 This report proposes new Town Hall tours at Lancaster Town Hall, in order to enhance the building as a visitor attraction, increase public access and develop its role as a unique and important historical building within the heritage city of Lancaster.

2.0 Proposal Details

Town Hall tours

- 2.1 This report has come forward at the request of Councillor Jon Barry, the current Mayor.
- 2.2 Completion of the current phase of repairs and maintenance work during the

early part of 2016 provides a useful opportunity to reinstate Town Hall tours.

- 2.3 The tours will begin in the Mayor's Parlour followed by the Main Staircase, The Council Chamber, The Ashton Hall, the Witness Room, and then the Courtrooms followed by the Police Cells. In line with many other historic attractions, the length of the tour will last approximately 1- 1½ hours and will help tell the story of the city and as well as the Town Hall itself.
- 2.4 The Mayor's Beadle is an excellent tour guide and in addition, tour guides can be provided by County Council or by a private sector provider, as and when required.
- 2.5 In the first place, it is proposed that tours take place on pre-arranged weekdays during July and August and this programme can be developed in line with demand. Further scheduled group or educational tours can be organised on request.
- 2.6 Research on other similar attractions suggests that £3 (£2 for concessionary tickets) is a reasonable charge for Town Hall tours and this will help to cover tour costs. Free admission can still be available for children and, for example, as part of Heritage Open Days.
- 2.7 Visitor marketing and promotion priorities for the Council change year on year dependent on what opportunities exist to achieve the best outcomes from the resources available. Lancaster Town Hall tours fit well with Lancaster's destination brand and its status as one of England's Heritage Cities so can potentially help to achieve a positive impact on the visitor economy and on Lancaster's profile within and beyond the district.
- 2.8 Reflecting the above points, marketing and promotion of Town Hall tours will be undertaken in a number of different ways, as follows:
 - The tours will reflect Lancaster's destination brand and be a new product feature of Lancaster's 'City of Stories' thematic campaign
 - A dedicated campaign will be run to promote the series of tours including the production of print and display materials, digital marketing
 - A PR launch will take place at the beginning of the season where the media are invited onto the tour
 - Opportunities to link the Town Hall tours with city heritage trails and Heritage Open days will be developed
 - Further promotion, face to face, telephone and on line promotion via the Visitor Information Centres
 - Features on the reception plasma screens at the Storey and Platform
 - Social media including Facebook (Morecambe and Lancaster VIC's) Twitter(@moreLancaster)
 - On line listing on Google Calendar and LOIS (Lancashire Online Information Service)
- 2.9 Ticketing for individual and group bookings will be undertaken by the Visitor Information Centres, using the Council's existing ticketing arrangements.
- 2.10 Dependent on the level of demand, the number of Town Hall tours could increase and income generation opportunities could be developed through ancillary services, such as catering and retail, where there is a business case.
- 2.11 Initially, it is expected that management and coordination of the proposed Town Hall tours can be undertaken by Regeneration and Planning within existing resources. Any developments over time will need to be considered further in terms of costs, capacity and potential income.

2.12 Although there is always a limited risk, ideally any event will at least pay for itself and should have the potential for surplus income once the Town Hall tours are established, and awareness and take up are increased.

2.13 Following the trial period, a review of the Town Hall tours will be undertaken to establish the overall costs and benefits and to consider potential for further development.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 Ongoing discussion with management of other significant attractions in the city will continue as the tours develop, in order to build on links between Lancaster's key heritage assets.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

	Option 1: Provide Town Hall tours	Option 2: Do not provide Town Hall tours
Advantages	<p>Better use of the Town Hall, as a public building, by visitors and local communities</p> <p>Increased profile for Lancaster as a visitor destination, as a result of higher profile events</p> <p>Improved recognition of the Town Hall as an important historical building in an English Heritage City</p> <p>Potential for income generation for the Council</p> <p>Efficient use of existing staff resources and skills</p>	<p>Building management arrangements simpler, as fewer public visits and events taking place</p> <p>Visitor marketing resources can be used for alternative campaigns</p>
Disadvantages	<p>Greater public access would directly lead to an increased security risk for the building</p> <p>Would take a large number of our events spaces out of action for one afternoon per week preventing bookings that may offer a greater financial reward</p> <p>Future building works are envisaged that could prevent access to some areas of the building. Adequate windows in the tours to allow completion of the works would need to be planned or there could be potential for complaints, refunds and the like.</p>	<p>Lost opportunity to increase use of the Town Hall by visitors and local communities</p> <p>Lost opportunity to enhance Lancaster's profile as a visitor destination and as an English Heritage City</p> <p>Less awareness of the Town Hall's historical and heritage value</p> <p>Loss of potential income</p>
Risks	<p>Low level financial risks exist as expenditure is required where</p>	

	<p>income is not guaranteed. Quality of the tour experience and good marketing and promotion will help to minimise this risk.</p> <p>There are currently several disabled access challenges within the building that could potentially have legal implications.</p> <p>The tours could prove to be unpopular but the resources necessary to make them to happen would still need to be accounted for.</p>	
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5.0 Officer Preferred Option (and comments)

5.1 The Officer preferred option is Option1, which increases access to and use of Lancaster Town Hall, within manageable costs and with the potential for income.

6.0 Conclusion

6.1 Lancaster Town Hall is an exceptional heritage building with facilities that do not exist elsewhere in the district. This report describes a number of ways in which the Town Hall can be made more available to visitors and those who live and work locally. This also raises the profile of Lancaster, supports the visitor economy, delivers an economic impact and generates income for the Council.

6.2 During 2016, arrangements for the tours and events described will be developed and initial tours and events will be staged. All tours and events will be reviewed to establish their viability on an ongoing basis.

<p>RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK</p> <p>The proposals in this report are consistent with the Councils’ Corporate Priority of Sustainable Economic Growth, the Outcome “Lancaster...will be recognised as (an) important visitor destination” and the Success Measure “Visitor numbers and spend will be increased”.</p>
<p>CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT (including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing)</p> <p>Access arrangements will need to be considered as part of the Lancaster Town Hall tours.</p>
<p>LEGAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>There are no direct legal implications as a result of this report.</p>
<p>FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS</p> <p>It is not expected that there will be any significant financial implications arising during the trial</p>

period. Should the need arise for a tour guide to be procured externally, then associated expenditure will need to be offset by additional tour income or from within existing resources, should a deficit arise. For information, it is estimated that for each individual tour an average of 8 visitors is required to cover external tour guide costs should internal resources not be available as required. Risks will be managed by ensuring the tour is engaging and attractive and by providing sufficient marketing and promotion, the latter also being met from within existing budgets in the first instance.

Management and marketing of the Town Hall tours will be managed primarily by officers within the Regeneration and Planning Service, albeit in liaison with Property Group regarding access to relevant areas within the Town Hall.

On this basis, there is no requirement for additional funding for Town Hall tours at the present time. Following the outcome of the review of the pilot, then any possible future requirement for further developments would need to be dealt with as part of the 2017/18 budget process.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

Human Resources:

Existing staff capacity is required to manage and market the tours and to ensure access to the relevant areas within the Town Hall.

Information Services:

There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

Property:

Town Hall tours rely on access to a range of rooms and facilities within Lancaster Town Hall. All arrangements will need to be in line with the Council's Lettings Policy.

Open Spaces:

There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Deputy Section 151 Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None

Contact Officer: Anne Marie Harrison

Telephone: 01524 582308

E-mail: amharrison@lancaster.gov.uk