

Cabinet

Reshaping the Council's Museums Service 13 February 2018

Report of Chief Officer (Regeneration and Planning)

PURPOSE OF REPORT				
To provide the final independent consultants report and request that Cabinet notes its suggestions for the future direction for the City Council's museums service and considers some early actions to underpin successful future management and development.				
Key Decision	X	Non-Key Decision		Referral from Cabinet Member
Date of notice of forthcoming key decision		15 January 2018		
This report is public				

RECOMMENDATIONS OF Councillor Darren Clifford

It is recommended that:

- 1) Cabinet reviews and notes the independent consultant report "Reshaping of Lancaster District's Museums Offer – Report of Findings and Recommendations (Aitken, Prince and Pearce)" at Appendix A.
- 2) Cabinet notes the initial focus of work over the next 6 months is the successful transfer of the museums service back to the Council and recruitment of a specialist manager to play a key role in management and development of the service.
- 3) Specialist funding support and match funding of up to £37,500 are provided to enable the development, submission and acceptance of a Resilient Heritage funding bid, from the remaining previously approved Budget Support Reserve allocation for the Museums Review, and subject to appropriate due diligence being undertaken.
- 4) That delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer (Resources) to update the General Fund Revenue Budget to reflect the additional expenditure and associated Resilient Heritage funding, if successful, subject to remaining budget neutral for the Council.
- 5) A preferred site option for a purpose-built Collections Centre is prepared (to inform the wider Museums Review), for consideration as part of a future report and in order to feed into the relevant annual budget process.

6) A further report is provided for Cabinet towards the end of 2018 when the museums service has transferred back to the Council.

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The city council has three museums; the City Museum in Market Square; the Maritime Museum at St George's Quay; the Cottage Museum on Castle Hill. Since 2003 the museums have been managed by Lancashire County Council under the Museums Service Partnership Agreement (MSPA) and integrated with the county-wide museums service.
- 1.2 Over the last two to three years a review of the council's museums has been undertaken and some options for redevelopment tested. The consultants' report at Appendix A, **"Reshaping of Lancaster District's Museums Offer – Report of Findings and Recommendations (Aitken, Prince and Pearce (AP+P), March 2017"** provides a summary of findings and some useful illustrations for examples of alternative business models.
- 1.3 In summary the key findings conclude that the museums have the potential to contribute much more to the area's economy; do not match the district's ambitions as an important sub regional centre; are relatively expensive to run; could be better integrated with the district's and the council's wider economic, tourism and cultural activities. Nevertheless all engagement with partners and stakeholders suggests that the museums are highly valued and are important to the district in terms of its unique heritage and culture, quality of life and place offer.
- 1.4 An ambitious and exciting approach to transforming the museums service is proposed by the consultants, who have worked closely with officers, members and stakeholders. There is clearly broad support for positive change but, at the same time, each and every element of such a wide ranging transformational programme of improvement is complex. Cabinet has been working with a Museums Cabinet Liaison Group which has considered the proposals at recent meetings and has identified a number of steps that can be taken to enable early progress.
- 1.5 As a result of this, at its September 2017 meeting Full Council considered and agreed a recommendation that the City Council take the museums service back in house (minute ref: 52). To support this, and the ongoing work of managing and developing the service, a Museums Manager post was also approved. Notice has now been provided to County Council and the transfer will take place by the 30 September 2018. Recruitment for a Museums Manager is about to commence.

2.0 Proposal Details

- 2.1 Following recent discussions with the Cabinet Liaison Group, recommendations in this report reflect the need to transfer the service effectively in the first instance and build on the opportunities to make improvements over time, working with staff, stakeholders and communities.

Independent Consultants Report

- 2.2 The consultants' report (Appendix A) suggests a comprehensive strategy for the Museums Service. Cabinet is asked to review and note this independent report at the current time. Any future decisions on elements of the strategy will need to be informed by further detailed work around the key options.

Transfer of the service

- 2.3 A successful transfer of the museums service back to the city council is a critical first step in moving the service development forward. Notice has been served and the service will therefore be returned to the council by the 1st October this year. The Cabinet Liaison Group was keen that this work, and the recruitment of a Museums Manager, be given the highest priority.

Resilient Heritage Funding

- 2.4 The potential to bid to Heritage Lottery Fund's (HLF) Resilient Heritage grant scheme has been discussed as a means by which the council can secure additional resources to: build its own capacity to manage the new responsibilities; work effectively with museums staff, partners and stakeholders. This recognises that it has been some years since the council managed its own museums and the transfer of the service means significant changes for both City Council and existing museums staff.
- 2.5 Any organisational change of this nature presents particular challenges, and Resilient Heritage funding can be used to assist transition, minimise disruption and progress the opportunities inherent in shaping new management structures and ways of working. Taking a bid forward is a specific recommendation of this report, noting that an existing Budget Support Reserve allocation of up to £35.7K out of the original £138.5K approved in June 2016 to fund feasibility studies in 2016/17 for the museums redevelopment was unspent, and so this could be used to provide both specialist funding support and some potential match funding to ensure a more successful transfer of the current museums service.

A Museums Collections Centre

- 2.6 An immediate and relatively straightforward action suggested by the report, and also discussed by the Cabinet Liaison Group, is to review detailed options for a new Collections Centre and consider a preferred site. This is an important initial step to address a serious constraint and limitation to the service and one which is possible to investigate in parallel to the immediate focus on the transfer of the museums service.

Future developments

- 2.7 Over the next 6 month period it is anticipated work will be intense, particularly around the time of the service transfer, and the recommendations in this report recognise the importance of getting it right. Future developments (including further consideration of a purpose-built Museums Collections Centre) can be considered in due course and it is expected that a further report to Cabinet will be presented toward the end of the year and fed into the annual budget process at the appropriate time, as required.

3.0 Details of Consultation

3.1 Consultation work has been undertaken in support of the reports as follows:

- Discussions with Arts Council England, Heritage Lottery Fund and Museums Development North West are ongoing
- A Cabinet Liaison Group discussed these proposals September and again in December.
- In terms of consultation with the public and with museums staff, details of these proposals have to date been treated as confidential, given the potential impact on county council staff currently employed within the Museums Service. However, no major decisions on reshaping the service have been taken at this time and meetings with staff will take place imminently.

4.0 Options and Options Analysis (including risk assessment)

4.1 Options relating to this report are limited as all recommendations are effectively proposing the means by which earlier decisions can be implemented effectively. Recommendations in relation to the potential Collections Centre and how it might inform the wider museums review will be considered in more detail in a later report.

4.2 In terms of risk it should be noted that there are risks associated with the transfer of the service back to the council. However, recommendations in this report are designed to mitigate these risks.

5.0 Conclusion

5.1 The work undertaken to date has been informative and it is clear that the City Council's museums have the potential for a greater impact, increased presence and profile and, at the same time, to be more sustainable in financial terms. By agreeing to take the museums service in-house the council has already made a strong commitment to repositioning the offer.

5.2 The independent AP&P report presents a series of significant operational and financial implications and considerations which cannot be fully determined at this stage. In the immediate short term, however, the City Council has to deliver the effective re-integration of the museums service into its establishment and this, in itself will be complex in legal, financial and management terms.

5.3 At this stage, Cabinet is therefore asked to agree that officers focus on the successful transfer of the Museums Service back to the City Council and recruitment of a specialist manager to play a key role in management and development of the service. This will be undertaken alongside the development of a HLF Resilient Heritage funding bid and more detailed consideration of options for a potential new Collections Centre and identification of a preferred site.

RELATIONSHIP TO POLICY FRAMEWORK

The proposals with this report support the council's Corporate Priorities of Sustainable Economic Growth and Community Leadership, contributing to the attractiveness and offer of the district, as a place to visit or invest in; rationalising the council's property portfolio to deliver better value for money; and improving efficiency and effectiveness through re-shaping services.

CONCLUSION OF IMPACT ASSESSMENT

(including Health & Safety, Equality & Diversity, Human Rights, Community Safety, HR, Sustainability and Rural Proofing):

No additional impacts as a direct result of this report.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

The city council has already given notice to Lancashire County Council under the terms of the current Management Agreement.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

It is not expected that there will be any additional financial implications arising for the Council at this stage.

If successful, the General Fund Revenue Budget will need to be updated as appropriate to reflect any additional expenditure and associated HLF Resilient Heritage grant funding, subject to proper due diligence being undertaken prior to submission of the bid and acceptance, thereafter, and remaining budget neutral for the Council.

As referred to within the report, more detail will be brought back to members covering the potential options available for a purpose-built Collections Centre for further consideration during the annual budget process. It is re-iterated here, however, that such a review will need to be successfully managed alongside the transfer of the current museums service back to city council operation from 1 October 2017, which will need to take priority in the first instance.

It is further anticipated that any specialist funding support or match funding requirement can be managed from within remaining museum review funding allocations in the Budget Support Reserve (BSR), up to a maximum of £35.7K, noting that application of the BSR is delegated to the Chief Officer (Resources), but subject to consultation (and therefore agreement) with Cabinet.

Finally, it is proposed that a further report is provided towards the end of 2018, once the museums service has transferred back to the Council.

OTHER RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS, such as Human Resources, Information Services, Property, Open Spaces:

Additional resources required in relation to the transfer of the museums service were broadly discussed as part of earlier reports. Some use of existing staff resources (as part of day to day business) will be required to progress a funding bid and to undertake early work to identify a preferred site for a Collections Centre.

SECTION 151 OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The s151 Officer has been consulted. Circa £35K of potential funding has now been identified to help fund museums, although this was not previously the case when the submission of the Museum's Manager growth bid was being developed. It would be appropriate, therefore, for Cabinet to reconsider options for funding the Museum Manager

post if Cabinet so wishes; it is currently unclear whether the full c£35K is needed. Effectively, approving the funding request in support of resilience would mean that the estimated additional up-front cost of bringing the museums service back in house would rise up to c£54K.

MONITORING OFFICER'S COMMENTS

The Monitoring Officer has been consulted and has no further comments

BACKGROUND PAPERS

none

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Appendix A - AP&P report