
MEETING:	CABINET
DECISION DATE:	23 JANUARY 2014
TITLE OF REPORT:	REDUCTION OF PUBLIC FACING MUSEUM DELIVERY
REPORT BY:	COLLECTIONS AND ARCHIVE MANAGER; AND CULTURAL SERVICES MANAGER

Classification

Open

Key Decision

This is a Key Decision because it is likely to be significant in terms of its effect on communities living or working in an area comprising one or more wards in the county.

NOTICE has been served in accordance with Part 3, Section 9 (Publicity in connection with key decisions) of The Local Authorities (Executive Arrangements) (Meetings and Access to Information) (England) Regulations 2012

Wards Affected

Central ward and County-wide

Purpose

To approve the recommendation for a reduction in opening hours of the museum service front of house delivery across the sites of the museum in Broad Street and the Old House in High Town, Hereford.

Recommendation(s)

THAT:

- (a) the opening hours for the Hereford Museum and Old House be reduced to achieve the required savings; and**
- (b) authority be delegated to the Director of Economy, Communities and Corporate to determine the detailed implementation of this reduction.**

Alternative Options

- 1 To maintain current opening hours of the Hereford Museum and Old House (Tues to Sat, plus Sun and bank holiday Mondays through the summer). This would have greater costs associated with regard to building running costs and staffing and require commensurate savings to be found in other budgets.
- 2 To close fully the front of house delivery of the museum service from Hereford Museum and Old House. This would leave only the Collections Team based at Museum Resource and Learning Centre and which would be less attractive for a trust to take on, as well as having a negative impact on the tourist offer for the city and the county.

Reasons for Recommendations

- 3 The council's financial position is such that, to enable essential services for its most vulnerable residents to be maintained, it must reduce both the range and the level of services provided to the minimum necessary whilst meeting statutory requirements, unless there are clear reasons to do otherwise.
- 4 The reduced hours option will allow us to reduce costs, whilst maintaining a core level of service across both collections and front of house, to ensure that a viable and attractive service model is brought to the discussions with trusts.
- 5 The current restructure in the museum service will deliver a reduced level of staffing across the new structure, therefore leading to a reduction in opening hours likely to begin in February 2014.
- 6 Heritage tourism is worth £26.4bn to the UK economy, according to research by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). A new report reveals that the new figure is £5.8bn higher than previously estimated in 2010. The increase is mainly due to a 13% rise in international visits and overnight holidays made by UK residents between 2007 and 2011. Tourism is an important local industry and the museum sites play a vital role in this.
- 7 In Herefordshire the analysis of the economic impact of the museum service has been assessed by applying the Economic Toolkit. This indicates that the service generates a wider income of £5,603,493, or a spend of £8.24 into the local economy for every pound invested in the service. For the Old House in Hereford there is a return of £41 for every pound spent on running the service in that facility. Within the community, museums support local businesses and the visitor attractions they

provide engage visitors and encourage tourism. The museums help to make Herefordshire a vibrant place to visit, live and work.

Key Considerations

- 8 On 19 September 2013 a Cabinet decision was made for the Museum service to undergo a restructure to a reduced level of service and to commence negotiations with existing trusts in order to find a sustainable and safeguarded future for the Museum service and the Herefordshire collections. The reduction in sites, staffing and, subsequently in opening hours, will enable the agreed savings target to be met.
- 9 Star Chamber discussions in October 2013 further proposed that a reduction in the front of house service be undertaken, moving towards a complete closure of the Broad St museum, and to stop work on future exhibitions. This would create further savings in 2014/15, but would also incur costs for safe removal and storage of artefacts from the closed sites. This would also leave a minimum service with no regular public facing museum delivery which would be an unattractive service for a trust to take on.
- 10 Ross Market House Heritage Centre is being offered to Ross Town Council as a Community Asset Transfer from April 2014, though the negotiations on this are not yet concluded. The restructure will result in this Heritage Centre closing before April 2014 – though this will allow the Museum Service to complete an externally funded project to update the displays.
- 11 Ledbury Heritage Centre has also been offered as a Community Asset Transfer. These negotiations are being finalised and a Ledbury based group will take over this site from 1 April 2014. This will have no impact on staffing levels as it is manned by volunteers.
- 12 Plans for exhibitions other than those already booked in for 2014 have been suspended. Those external exhibitors that are already booked in have signed an agreement with the museum service. The WW1 exhibition planned for next Summer is part of a wider HLF funded project to commemorate Herefordshire's contribution to the Great War.
- 13 The Old House is covenanted by a deed of gift to the Council, the terms of which state that "The Old House shall not at any time hereafter be used for any commercial purpose of any kind whatsoever or re-sold by the Corporation". It has been offered to the City Council as a Community Asset Transfer but this offer has been declined.
- 14 The refurbishment of the Museum Resource and Learning Centre was carried out with HLF funding. The condition of this funding means that the building must be used for heritage/museum collections for a period of 25 years or the funding (£1,233,000) would need to be repaid. At this stage 19 years remain of this 25 year term.
- 15 If the front of house provision is stopped, the sites will lose their accredited status. The UK Accreditation scheme is the mark of a professional museum service which also enables access to funding for project and development work and supports the county-wide network of independent museums for curatorial advice and mentoring.
- 16 The museum service holds a collection of objects which tell the story of the people and the life of Herefordshire. It sets out to record history, for current and future enjoyment and stimulation, for learning, research and pleasure. The service has a

moral and legal responsibility for the collection which is held in trust by the council on behalf of the donors. There is a universal market for the service including local people, national and international visitors, including research visitors, also schools, the cared for community and the voluntary sector. The wider service and professional staff also support the work of the independent museums around the county, including supporting their accreditation applications.

- 17 The reduced resource will require some reduction in opening hours at the remaining facilities. It is proposed to use this remaining resource as flexibly as possible to maintain a core offer that can be transferred to a future museum trust. Any reduction in hours must be widely communicated to local users and via the website etc. to national and international visitors.
- 18 The report of the Cultural Services Task & Finish Group was received on 8 January 2014 and as this report was being finalised. Its recommendation 6 indicates that no arrangements for the closure of public facing museum services shall take effect until reasonable time is given to the feasibility of other Trusts and community groups taking over the service. The establishment of a trust is considered elsewhere on this agenda. This report's focus is on the reduction in opening hours at the Hereford Museum and the Old House rather than their closure. Nevertheless the report sets out the measures that are being put in place to consult with staff and stakeholders on the details of the package.

Community Impact

- 19 The museum service contributes to the vitality of the county – providing opportunities for citizens and visitors to find out about the history of the area and explore this through outreach activities and events, as well as the permanent and temporary exhibitions. Knowledge of a person's past can help to enhance their well-being and sense of connection to a place.
- 20 The museum contributes to “vibrant town centres with shops, restaurants and leisure facilities that keep people spending locally”. The museum service also provides a range of formal and informal learning opportunities – contributing to the Corporate Plan's aim: “there is access to excellent education and learning opportunities at all levels”. Further the museum service has a large number of dedicated volunteers – further contributing to the Corporate Plan's aim to “increase the % of residents who volunteer at least once a week”.
- 21 Visitor and user numbers for the Old House and Museum in 2012/13 were 34,762 and 28,726 respectively. This represents a mix of residents, national and international visitors.

Equality and Human Rights

- 22 It is not expected that this recommendation will impact our public sector equality duty.

Financial Implications

- 23 The approved option in September was to reduce the service to make the identified savings of £239,274. The restructure and its consequent reduced service offer will make these savings in 2014/15, besides the £48,000 savings in 2013/14. The service will continue to be funded internally whilst discussions with trusts are ongoing.

It is anticipated that a trust will be responsible for the museum service from April 2015, with a core funding SLA. A separate report on this agenda addresses this matter in greater detail.

- 24 Herefordshire Council has a 25 year contract with the HLF and which provided £1.2 million funding for the Museum Resource and Learning Centre. There are 19 years left of this agreement to run. A condition of the grant is that HLF would seek to reclaim funding if the facility was closed, if its purpose changed from its original purpose and/or if access to the collection was not maintained.

Legal Implications

- 25 The Old House is covenanted by a deed of gift to the council, the terms of which state that "The Old House shall not at any time hereafter be used for any commercial purpose of any kind whatsoever or re-sold by the Corporation". It is possible consent could be sought to a change to the covenant however the body having the benefit of a covenant is not obliged to give consent and would be likely to charge a considerable sum for its discharge if they agree at all.

Risk Management

- 26 The broader risks associated with reduced funding for cultural services will be captured in the risk register of the Economic, Environment and Cultural Services.
- 27 That the local economy is adversely affected by a reduction in hours or whole closure of the public facing delivery. This will be mitigated by continuing to offer outreach activities from the remaining site or sites
- 28 That the savings targets will not be met if the current opening hours remain. This will be mitigated by the reduction in hours following the restructure.
- 29 That a local trust will not wish to take on the museum service with no public facing offer, meaning that there may not be a sustainable future for the service and its collections. Mitigated by retaining some public facing service delivery, albeit at reduced hours.

Consultees

- 30 Ongoing engagement with ward members and partners has been through the stakeholder group. Following the completion of the recent staff restructure there will be further with staff and stakeholders regarding the reduced opening hours, to confirm the days and opening times.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None