



**Report to: Joint Museums Committee, 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021**

**Report of: Museums Manager**

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**Subject: 2021-22 QUARTER 2 PERFORMANCE**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the Joint Committee note the performance information provided relating to the 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter 2021-22.**

**2. Background**

2.1 The appended summary of performance indicators and the information below gives an account of progress in delivering the work programme against plans and against targets in comparison to previous years.

**3. Information**

3.1 Performance at all three museums over the 2021 summer was in line with performance in pre-pandemic summers. This suggests that museum visiting behaviour is returning to similar patterns rather than significantly changing. This is interesting to compare with libraries, where visits in person are still much lower than in 2019, with users instead maximising opportunities for engaging digitally instead. The power of real objects remains core to the museum experience.

3.2 At the Art Gallery & Museum, the Titanic exhibition was extremely popular and comparative to 2019's success with the Star Wars exhibition, after taking into account the need to limit visitors to enable social distancing in the Art Gallery. The service has learned a great deal about managing queuing and booking, which will be used for future popular exhibition planning.

3.3 At Hartlebury Castle, a larger percentage than previously of visitors chose to visit just the grounds rather than the whole site, with this choice driven by the increased offer outdoors as well as the perception that this is safer when mixing with other households. Family visits have increased and concession visits decreased. While this reflects our joint aim on site to offer facilities that attract more families, we also hope to attract back older visitors out of season and have introduced off-season short talks in the museum supporting this.

3.4 Although The Commandery experienced lower visitor numbers initially after reopening, this improved with August and September seeing more visitors than in previous years. Perhaps more importantly, this year has seen a step change in the diversity of site users, with visitors coming for events, hires such as weddings, formal and informal learning opportunities as well as tourists to Worcester.

As a result The Commandery has made maximum use of its indoor and outdoor space and has this year made a real impact for the local community as well as an economic impact for the City. This diversity of use makes the site more resilient long-term, as well as making it a lively space.

- 3.5 Earned income is back on track to align to targets. The diversity of income streams the museums have developed has been central to this bounce-back, whereas sites with less flexibility of space such as Worcester's Guildhall have seen slower income recovery. This learning on diverse income streams will feed into future planning for the Art Gallery & Museum and for the County Museum.
- 3.6 The visitor return has seen a large increase in online activity which we anticipate reflects a need this year for visitors to check Covid protocols before visiting and thus unlikely to continue as visiting becomes more predictable. The use of Art Tickets enabling visitors to book for events online has been a steep learning curve for staff but has great potential for greater use ongoing.
- 3.7 Formal education numbers usually take a dip in quarter 2, but this year schools' keenness to return late in the summer term and the Holiday, Activities and Food programme at The Commandery in the school summer holiday has reversed that historic trend. Lockdowns effectively stopped income from formal education activities, but currently looks on track to return to normal levels through the autumn term.
- 3.8 There has also been a big increase in informal learning participation. All sites have made bigger use of family trails this summer, following piloting post-Covid funded by the Culture Recovery Fund. Although this use partly compensates for the reduced amount of interactives available as part of a normal Covid-safe visit, we will continue to consider trails in our offer going forward.
- 3.9 The majority of work set out in the service plan is on track to achieve, albeit with some delays due to having kept posts vacant when income was uncertain. Recruiting is now a challenge and there is currently reduced capacity in several areas. It is not expected that any initiatives will have to be cancelled, just that some milestones may have to be adjusted as we approach year end.

**Ward(s):**

**Contact Officer:**

**Supporting documents:**

**All wards**

**Philippa Tinsley, Tel: 01905 25371, email:**

**philippa.tinsley@worchester.gov.uk**

**Appendix 1: MW PIs summary Q2 2021-22**

**Appendix 2: MW Service Plan 2021-22 Q2**