



**Report to: Communities Committee, 20<sup>th</sup> July 2022**

**Report of: Museums Manager**

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**Subject: MUSEUMS WORCESTERSHIRE ANNUAL REVIEW**

**1. Recommendation**

**1.1 That the Committee note the activities undertaken in museums in 21-22 and the impact made.**

**2. Background**

2.1 Museums Worcestershire is the joint museum service for Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council. Since its establishment in 2010, local residents' satisfaction with museums has increased significantly and both authorities have been able to reduce their spending on museums through efficient shared working.

2.2 In Worcester City, Museums Worcestershire manage the Art Gallery & Museum, The Commandery and cares for the collections of the City which, starting in 1833 makes Worcester's the 6<sup>th</sup> oldest museum in the country. The service runs programmes of exhibitions, events, formal and informal learning for all ages and supports wider culture and heritage through joint projects and professional advice.

2.3 Museums Worcestershire has been hosted by Worcester City Council since July 2018. The service is overseen by a Joint Museums Committee with members from both authorities. The committee feeds into the Communities Committee within the City's committee structure.

**3. Information**

3.1 The appended annual review of Museums Worcestershire activity in 2021-22 was approved by the Joint Museums Committee at their June meeting and recommended for presentation to this Committee.

3.2 The report highlights the impact that museums make in the City and County, illustrated through information, comments from users and performance figures.

3.3 Recovery post-Covid to the Museums Worcestershire museums has been more rapid than the national picture, with visit numbers only slightly down on 2019 despite sites still being locked down in April and May 2021. Some months saw record numbers, even when visitors were carefully managed to minimise Covid risk. This compares to the major national museums seeing 73% fewer visitors in 2021 than 2019. The museums are involved in initiatives from Visit Worcestershire and Visit Worcester to boost visitors back to the city and county.

- 3.4 Educational visits were slow initially in 2021, but then returned rapidly from autumn 2021 onwards. A new 'Birth of Democracy' session was launched at The Commandery and has been very popular with schools.
- 3.5 Museums used core council funding to lever in nearly a quarter of the museums' budget in external funding. Several projects supported city residents in their own recovery, with some highlights being:
- Both winter and summer sessions of *Holiday Activities and Food* for children eligible for free school meals, many of these hyper-local to our museums.
  - Third phase of *Suitcase Stories*, using reminiscence to engage those living with dementia and their carers, and the sharing of our results with both museum and social care professionals.
  - Using the City's significant glove collection, and research gathered from local people about working in the glove industry, to reach out with activities for Worcester people at risk of loneliness and isolation, for looked-after children and for newly-arrived refugees.
- 3.6 The service has also prepared for the future. The fundraising charity Worcestershire Heritage, Art & Museums is registered and its first major donation has been received. Townsfunding has been allocated to develop the City's museums through the 'Heritage & Riverside' project, representing a new phase in the development of The Commandery, and the start of development to improve the City's collection displays and facilities at the Art Gallery & Museum.

**Ward(s):** **All wards**  
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**Supporting documents:** **Museums Worcestershire Annual Review 21-22**