



Report to: Joint Museums Committee, 16th September 2022

Report of: Museums Manager

Subject: MUSEUMS 2023-24 FEES AND CHARGES

1. Recommendation

That the Joint Committee:

- 1.1 Approves the proposed package of changes to the Museums' fees and charges and recommends their inclusion in the wider Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council fee setting process; and**
- 1.2 Approves the temporary alteration from 1/1/2023 of any fees to be included in annual calendar-year publicity.**

2 Background

- 2.1 In 2010, as part of the Joint Museums Agreement, the two partner authorities agreed the following approach for setting of fees and charges for museums:
 - Inflationary rises in fees & charges be delegated to the Museums Manager as part of the annual service planning
 - Alterations, temporary charges and wider changes to fees as part of business planning should be agreed by the Joint Museums Committee
 - The introduction of any new fees or charges should be taken by the relevant authority to Cabinet (Worcestershire County Council) or the appropriate Committee (at Worcester City Council) on recommendation from the Joint Museums Committee
- 2.2 Museums Worcestershire brings proposed changes to the Joint Museums Committee at this time each year for discussion, following which they can be included in both partner authority approval processes in November.

3 Information

- 3.1 The charges proposed this year are predominantly an inflationary increase. Inflation is currently challenging to forecast – last year 3% was used, an average between the retail price index and the consumer prices index at time of report writing. Using the same RPI/CPI average as last year would now result in an 11.2% inflationary increase. The Bank of England has recently forecast an inflationary rise to 13.3% at the end of this year followed by a later fall. The actual cost of maintaining the joint service has increased by 9.37% in 2022-23.
- 3.2 However, we are conscious that our visitors will also be feeling the impact of rising prices and we are therefore proposing working mainly to a 5% increase, prioritising minimising increases to fees mainly used by residents and families.

- 3.3 As in previous years, following advice from our commissioned retail consultant, we have rounded proposed new admission charges to the nearest psychological price point, a strategy common amongst successful visitor attractions. This means that most change proposals are not a precise 5% increase and we have instead rounded up or down depending upon the target of the charge.
- 3.4 In 2019, the Joint Committee approved a proposal to align archaeology deposit fees with the national average, but over a period so that archaeology units could incorporate this change within their planning. These fees therefore continue to rise above inflation, on schedule to align with national averages in 4 years' time.
- 3.5 Under the terms of their agreement with Worcestershire County Council, Hartlebury Castle Preservation Trust should propose any changes to the shared admissions charges before November each year. The approval of shared admissions charges is currently delegated to the Assistant Director (Communities) in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of this committee, in order to support HCPT's need to make faster and more reactive decisions to grow their business plan.
- 3.6 We have included the proposal for a new fee at The Commandery, following the change in the law to allow weddings outdoors. This is highlighted in blue in the appendix and will be recommended for adoption as part of the wider City Council fee setting process.
- 3.7 While fees & charges are considered by the two authorities on a financial year basis, the majority of publicity for museums is produced annually for a calendar year. It is proposed that 2023 publicity should include any increased prices, rather than delaying changes.

4 Preferred Option

- 4.1 The attached appendix sets out the proposed fees for 2023-24. Fees charges in 22-23 and 21-22 are included as a reference point.

5 Alternative Options Considered

- 5.1 Benchmarking for both room hire and education visits has been undertaken this year, comparing our current fees against similar activities within the region and this has resulted in a reduced charge for serviced room hire. Regular benchmarking ensures that Museums Worcestershire fees are comparative to other similar attractions, neither pricing our activities beyond the market nor undermining other services.

6 Implications

6.1 Financial and Budgetary Implications

Income from fees and charges makes up about one fifth of Museums Worcestershire's planned annual budget. The level at which these are set impacts upon the ability to meet the annual work plan for the service. If the income rises less than the corresponding costs, that reduction in income needs either to be found in savings or in an increased contribution from each partner authority (or both).

6.2 Legal and Governance Implications

There are no legal and governance implications to this report.

6.3 Risk Implications

There is an inherent risk in meeting fee targets when working in a commercial environment. This is managed by careful monitoring of performance and, if necessary, associated expenditure.

6.4 Corporate/Policy Implications

There are no corporate policy implications to this report.

6.5 Equality Implications

The changes proposed in this report have been reviewed for equality implications and it has been concluded these are minimal as most public charge increases are in line with inflation.

6.6 Human Resources Implications

There are no human resources implications to this report.

6.7 Health and Safety Implications

There are no H&S implications to this report.

6.8 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

There changes proposed in this report have been reviewed for social, environmental or economic implications and it has been concluded there is no significant impact.

Ward(s):

All wards

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Supporting

Documents:

Appendix 1: Proposed Museums Fees & Charges 2023-24