

JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

6th October 2022

Present: Councillor Marcus Hart in the Chair
Councillors Agar, Mrs L. Hodgson (Vice-Chair) and Roberts

Officers: Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance (Worcester City Council)
Deborah Fox, Senior Curator
Hannah Perrott, Assistant Director, Communities (Worcestershire County Council)
Philippa Tinsley, Museums Manager

12 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

13 Declarations of Interest

None.

14 Public Participation

None.

15 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meetings held on 7th June 2022 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

16 Quarter 1 Performance Report 2022-23

The Joint Committee considered a report on progress in delivering the work programme against targets in the period April-June 2022, in comparison to previous years. The Museums Manager presented the report and highlighted the key points.

It was noted that visitor numbers to all sites and income have recovered to pre-pandemic levels, in line with our most successful years.

Reference was made to the sad news that Professor Rolf Olsen, the Chairman of Trustees of the newly formed Worcestershire Heritage, Art and Museums charity, had recently passed away after a short illness. The charity will be continuing to work on Professor Olsen's ambitions, and it is hoped to involve his family in the planning.

There had been one item of negative feedback during the quarter, from a visually impaired customer. Staff had responded promptly to address the matters raised, working in partnership with Sight Concern.

Members acknowledged the work done to ensure recovery of visitor numbers.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the performance information for the 1st quarter 2022-23.

17 Quarter 1 Finance Report 2022-23

The Joint Committee received a report on the financial monitoring details including budget variances for the 1st quarter ended 30th June 2022. The Head of Finance, Worcester City Council presented the report and highlighted the main points.

It was noted that, whilst the forecast year-end position at Q1 is £36,992 surplus, the 2022/23 pay award is anticipated to be significantly higher than provided for in the service's budget set in November 2021. It is expected that this position will be better understood by the November meeting. There will be a separate report to the Joint Committee to propose any ongoing structural changes required.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the financial monitoring details, including budget variances for the 1st Quarter ended 30th June 2022.

18 Museums 2023-24 Fees and Charges

The Joint Committee considered a proposed package of changes to the Museums' fees and charges and their inclusion in the wider Worcester City Council and Worcestershire County Council fee setting process. The Museums Manager presented the report and explained that the proposals were for a 5% increase across the board, rounded up or down. This approach was intended to prioritise minimising increases to fees for services mainly used by residents and families.

It was explained that, while fees and 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 was therefore proposed that 2023 publicity should include any increased prices, rather than delaying changes.

In the ensuing discussion, the following main points were raised:

- The proposal for a new fee at The Commandery, following the change in the law to allow weddings outdoors, reflects the fact that the hire will include the use of some indoor spaces. The fee is broadly similar to that charged for wedding hire at the Guildhall.
- At present, there are only a limited number of days on which the Museum and Art Gallery is available for hire. Officers will look at how this offer can be developed.
- The current Canaletto exhibition is the first occasion on which an admission charge has been applied. Officers will review the take-up and feedback received.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee agree to approve:

- 1. 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**
- 2. the temporary alteration from 1 January 2023 of any fees to be included in annual calendar-year publicity.**

19 Collections Development Update

The Senior Curator provided an update report on progress and forward aims on work to develop the two authorities' museum collections. She highlighted a number of aspects, including a planned application to Arts Council England to fund an eighteen-month project to translate outreach work into improved museum displays and plans for returning long-term loans before the lease at the Collections Store ends in 2025.

The Museums Manager reported that a number of projects had received specific Covid emergency funding from Historic England, Arts Council England and the Department of Culture Media & Sport's Covid Emergency Response Funds. The funders had agreed that their funding towards core salary time and overheads could be moved to museum reserves at their project year-ends. These projects are now complete with all funding confirmed, but still holding reserves of £14,444 (No One Left Behind), £100 (Culture Recovery 1) and £442 (Culture Recovery 3). These reserves are no longer required to be ring-fenced to these projects and the funders do not require any additional reporting on their use. Approval was sought to de-restrict these reserves and to allocate £9,000 from general reserves to:

- fund a fixed-term post 1 day per week for 12 months to work on returning long-term loans, and
- provide a budget for return transport for larger loans.

Members discussed the policy on the return of long-term loans. Officers explained that this can be challenging for a number of reasons, including tracing descendants of original lenders and the large size of some of the objects. To make progress with lenders, this work needs dedicated capacity, hence the proposal to establish a funding allocation from general reserves.

Members expressed support for the proposed way forward.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee agree to:

- 1. note the progress and forward aims on work to develop the two authorities' museum collections;**
- 2. approve the de-restriction of the emergency Covid Project Reserves; and**
- 3. allocate £9,000 from general reserves to support the return of long-term loans and the continuity of community-focussed collections work.**

20 **Canaletto Exhibition at Worcester Museum and Art Gallery**

The Senior Curator informed the Joint Committee of the exhibition from 1st October 2022 to 7th January 2023 and accompanying programme celebrating the work of Canaletto. It is the most ambitious and expensive exhibition ever developed at Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum and the service has been successful in bids for external funding from Art Fund, Elmley Foundation and Arts Worcestershire of £20,500, in addition to specific additional support from Worcester City Council.

She advised that this is a ticketed event, with a 50% discount for Worcester residents and free admission for under-16s. Furthermore, free learning sessions are available for schools, colleges and home educator groups. The service will also be working with community groups such as Sight Concern and Worcestershire's local community of Ukrainian refugees to offer targeted free-admission vouchers. This approach will also be used to reach sixth formers studying art. Bursaries have been funded by the Elmley Foundation for university level students at the University of Worcester and Hereford College of Art who are specialising in the arts to participate in a specialist-supported field trip to Venice.

A question was asked about whether a further discount can be offered to Worcester residents who cannot afford the discounted admission fee. Reference was made to feeding into the work of the City Council's Cost of Living Task and Finish Group. The Museums Manager agreed to investigate these points with the relevant City Council Officers.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the progress in development of the Canaletto exhibition and its associated community impact.

21 **County Museum Development**

The Joint Committee considered a report on the two leases which are held by Worcestershire County Council for the area making up the County Museum at Hartlebury Castle, and also the lease on the Collections Store at Hartlebury Trading Estate. The Museums Manager presented the report and explained that all these leases will come to an end over the next few years. Work has started to investigate the lease-end options for the two sites, with the aim of discussing those with partners and presenting an options appraisal to this Committee next year, to then be recommended for a decision to the County Council Cabinet.

The report included an exempt appendix, which summarises the lease positions and the property investigation work. The Joint Committee considered this information in private as the information is commercially sensitive.

The Museums Manager advised that the report on the options appraisal is likely to be presented to the Joint Committee in March or June.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the planning underway to manage the County Museum's upcoming lease ends.

22 Joint Museums Committee Work Plan

The Joint Committee considered its future work programme. The Museums Manager presented the report and highlighted the main items for consideration at future meetings.

There were no additional items added to the work programme by Joint Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the work programme.

23 Any Other Business

It was noted that the next meeting will be held on 17 November 2022 at the City Museum and Art Gallery. Members asked if they could be given a tour prior to the meeting. The Museums Manager stated that she would look to arrange this.

24 Item Involving the Disclosure of Exempt Information

RESOLVED: That under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following item of business on the grounds that they involve the likely disclosure of information as defined in Schedule 12A of the said Act.

25 County Museum Development

The Joint Committee considered a report on the terms of the County Museum property leases. The item was classed as exempt as the information was commercially sensitive. Members noted the report.

Duration of the meeting: 11.30a.m. – 12.50p.m.

Chair at the meeting on
17th November 2022