

JOINT MUSEUMS COMMITTEE

7th March 2024

Present: Councillor Gregson in the Chair

Councillors Agar, Gregson, Hart and May

Officers: Hannah Perrott, Assistant Director,
Communities (Worcestershire County
Council)
Philippa Tinsley, Museums Manager
Helen Large, Museums Audiences Manager
Mark Baldwin, Head of Finance

30 Appointment of Substitutes

None.

31 Declarations of Interest

None.

32 Public Participation

None.

33 Minutes

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting held on 26th October 2023 be approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

Matters arising: -

Minute No's 26 and 29 – Worcester City Museums Review

The Chair asked for an update on this item. The Museums Manager stated that the item had been reported to the Place and Economic Development Committee in November 2023, who had supported the proposal, but with a suggestion to extend the hours of opening on a Sunday to 4.00pm. The matter was delegated to the Managing Director in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair to make the final decision once costs were established. The Museums Manager confirmed that the original proposal went forward, and the revised hours of opening took effect from 1st January 2024 and was going well.

34 Quarters 2 and 3 Performance Report 2023-24

The Joint Committee received a report on progress in delivering the work programme against targets in the period July-December 2023, in comparison to the previous five years.

The Museums Manager presented the report and highlighted the key points as set out in Appendix 1.

Joint Museums Committee Members were informed that as the Joint Committee now only met 3 times a year, Quarters 2 and 3 would be reported together at the March meeting.

The County Museum at Hartlebury Castle had performed well with visitor numbers now averaging 20% above 2019 levels. The Commandery was awarded Visit England's Gold Visitor Attraction Accolade for the first time in October and the City Art Gallery's summer exhibition *I Grew Up in the 80's*, which started on 8th July, gave the venue its highest footfall in July since performance records began.

The Museums Manager drew the Joint Committee's attention to the Commandery's Escape Room, which has been open for just over a year and has seen 149 bookings which has been part of the increase in earned income. The Museums Manager proposed that, when an end-of-year surplus is made, the surplus generated by the Escape Room above its income target is designated within the museum general reserve, and this be held to invest in the offer every few years. The performance of the Escape Room will be monitored and the designation for the Escape Room in the museum general reserves would be reported as part of the ongoing finance reports to the Committee.

The Museums Manager and Head of Finance responded to questions from Joint Committee Members who were supportive of the proposal.

That the Joint Committee:

- 1. note the performance information relating to the 2nd and 3rd quarters 2023-24; and**
- 2. approve the proposed future management of income from The Commandery's Escape Room.**

35 End of Quarter 3 Finance Report 2023-24

The Joint Committee received a report on the financial monitoring details including budget variances for the end of the 3rd quarter, ending 31st December 2023. The report provided information on the year end forecast as of 31st December 2023, an explanation of main variances and reserves.

The Head of Finance, Worcester City Council, presented the report and highlighted the main points. It was noted that the year-end position at quarter 3 is a surplus of £25,546. The value of the general reserve at the end of quarter 3 was £191,470. Amounts were designated from this reserve by the Joint Committee in June 2023 as outlined in paragraph 3.7 of the report.

The Chair queried what was behind the supplies and services for Hartlebury as shown in the table at 3.5 of the report. The Museums Manager agreed to check and report back.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the financial monitoring details including budget variances for the period ending 31st December 2023.

36 Museums Worcestershire Service Plan 2024-25

The Joint Committee considered a report on the Museums Worcestershire Service Plan for 2024-25.

The Joint Museums Committee is required to approve an annual service work plan under the terms of the Museums Agreement. The plan provides a detailed work programme for the forthcoming financial year based on the overall direction and strategic objectives within the strategic plan 2019-24. These were highlighted in paragraph 2.2 of the report. The proposed 2024-25 Service Plan is attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

Worcestershire Heritage, Art and Museums, the registered charity established to support the Museums Worcestershire museums, is currently developing a three-year strategy based around four main themes of support. The Museums Accreditation Standard requires planning documents for the current and subsequent planning year, approved by the governing body, these requirements are met by the annual service plan and the 5-year strategic plan. The format used for the 24-25 Service Plan includes information about resources and staff to support meeting the standard.

The Museums Manager responded to questions from Joint Committee Members, particularly around engagement with schools.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee approve the service work plan for 2024-25.

37 City Art Gallery and Museum Development

The Joint Committee considered a report on the Art Gallery and Museum development.

The Museums Manager presented the report and provided background for Joint Committee Members who were asked to note the progress on planned developments at Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum, including the Worcestershire Solider display.

In June 2023, the Joint Committee designated £63,500 from the museums' general reserve to be used for development at Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum, but the specific use of these funds has not yet agreed.

The Joint Committee's attention was drawn to the preferred option at section 3 of the report, where it was proposed to extend the secondment arrangement backfilling the Social History Curator and Commandery Manager until 2027, using the designated reserve of £63,500 which would enable the co-ordination of the proposed new displays of the glove collection.

The Museums Manager highlighted the risk implication within the report and stated that regular reporting to the Joint Museums Committee would continue in order to keep a close oversight of the risk.

The Museums Manager responded to questions and comments from Joint Committee Members.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee:

1. **note the progress on planned developments at Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum, including with the Worcestershire Soldier display; and**
2. **approve the use of the museum general reserves already designated for Worcester City Art Gallery and Museum development to add capacity to the museum team to support the development plans.**

38 Joint Museums Committee Work Programme

The Joint Committee considered its future work programme.

The Museums Manager in presenting the report highlighted the main items for consideration at future meetings and asked Joint Committee Members whether there were any additional items which they considered needed to be incorporated.

The Joint Committee's attention was drawn to paragraph 2.3 of the report which related to Arts England deciding to extend the current funding of the National Portfolio Organisations to 2027. None of the Museums Worcestershire museums is currently in the portfolio, but the current strategic plan includes a review to apply, but this will fall into the next one, so it has been postponed from the Joint Committee's immediate work programme.

The Chair pointed out that the 6th June 2024 meeting date coincided with the 80th Anniversary of the D-Day landings and potentially members/officers would be otherwise engaged. It was agreed that this date would be rescheduled.

It was requested that the Arts Council Funded Collections Work be added to the work programme.

RESOLVED: That the Joint Committee note the future work programme and agree to the change of the June 2024 meeting date (to be confirmed) and the inclusion of the Art Funding Collections Work.

39 Any Other Business

None.

Duration of the meeting: 10.00a.m. to 10.50a.m.

Chair at the meeting on
12th June 2024