



Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 26th July 2021

Report of: Museums Manager

Subject: MUSEUMS WORCESTERSHIRE ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the committee note the activities undertaken in museums in 2020 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 6th 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.

3. Information

- 3.1 The appended annual review of Museums Worcestershire activity in 2020-21 was approved by the Joint Museums Committee at their June meeting.
- 3.2 The report highlights the impact that museums make in the City and County, illustrated through case studies, comments from users and performance figures.
- 3.3 2020-21 was an extraordinary and difficult year. The annual review expands on how the Museums team transitioned rapidly to continue to benefit the City and County through new ways of working during lockdown and during limited opening. By working hard to bring in significant emergency funding, the management team were able to develop different delivery methods and support volunteers, our councils, Worcestershire's heritage community and local artists. These also brought important learning for the service to take into future planning and development.

- 3.4 The three museums were open to the public the maximum time legally allowed. Maximum numbers were carefully monitored and controlled and were limited by pre-booking for dates with popular activities. Visitors returned at around half the volume as in normal years, with particular success for outdoor spaces and activities families could do safely together. This compares with the central-government-funded museums who averaged 18% of visitor numbers returning.
- 3.5 The need to staycation brought new visitors to Worcestershire and to our museums in summer 2020. Worcester Art Gallery & Museum had more visitors in 2020-21 than either the Royal Armouries or the National Media Museum, both much larger institutions with central-government funding. Although lower than in normal years, the economic impact of the three museums through related spend in the local economy (calculated using standard methodology from the Association of Independent Museums) was still close to half a million pounds.
- 3.6 Family learning activities, links to education institutions and volunteering were all maintained in new ways, providing benefits to those parts of our audience on who Covid had had very negative impacts. Museums Worcestershire initiatives in working with volunteers at home and in supporting smaller heritage organisations have resulted in a legacy of resources that are being accessed and adopted nationally.
- 3.7 Throughout a year of many challenges, we have continued to plan ahead, aiming to incorporate the learning of 20-21. Culture Recovery funding has contributed expert advice and infrastructure to support our commercial forward planning, and philanthropic support has continued to grow. Improvement to Worcester's museums and the increased economic benefit this can bring to the City is part of Worcester's Townsfund plans, maximised through the support of a network of partners and other funders.

Ward(s): All wards
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Background Papers: none
Supporting documents: Museums Worcestershire Annual Review 20-21