



Report to: Joint Museums Committee, 7th June 2022

Report of: Museums Manager

Subject: MUSEUMS WORCESTERSHIRE ANNUAL REVIEW, AND PERFORMANCE IN 2021-22

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the Joint Museums Committee approves the Museums Worcestershire Annual Review for 2021-22, and

1.2 That the Joint Museums Committee note the information provided regarding performance in 2021-22 compared to previous years.

2 Background

2.2 The Joint Museums Service Agreement requires the presentation of an annual report or review to the Joint Committee at its annual meeting. The proposed Annual Review for 2021-22 is appended to this report as an appendix.

2.3 The appended summary of annual performance indicators also give an account of progress in delivering the work programme against service priorities and targets throughout. This performance data is used by Museums Worcestershire's management team to shape the priorities of upcoming work.

3 Information

3.2 The intention is to circulate the Annual Review to the key partners and stakeholders, as well as publishing the report on the museum's services website www.museumsworcestershire.org.uk. The report will also be circulated to all City and County Councillors.

3.3 Some of the key points on performance in 2021-22 to note are:

- Recovery across the heritage and cultural sector has been slow, with visitor research by the Audience Agency, and performance at the Association of Leading Attractions (ALVA) sites showing visitors returning at lower than pre-pandemic numbers. ALVA sites that were predominately outdoors saw 17% fewer visitors in 2021 than in 2019; the major national museums and galleries had 73% fewer visitors in 2021 than 2019. The Audience Agency research found that people tend to be visiting closer to home and the main motivator was to spend time with others in a sociable setting.

Worcestershire's museums were able to offer visitors the right experiences and so visit numbers were only slightly down on 2019 as a whole, despite all sites still being in lockdown in April and May 2021. Some months, particularly during school holidays and when offering special events and exhibitions, saw record numbers, even when visitors were carefully managed in order to minimise Covid risks. As a result the economic impact of our museums on the local economy was increased from all previous years, nearly reaching £2million.

- Educational visits were slow initially but then returned rapidly from the autumn 2021 onwards. It's interesting to see that at The Commandery and Hartlebury, returning schools have been predominately KS2 (older primary-aged children), and this perhaps reflects a long-term change that we will continue to review. The Art Gallery, however, saw a real broadening of its formal education offer following some active piloting of work for Early Years children and closer linking with exhibitions. This will develop further over the next year as we aim to maximise the opportunities of the temporary exhibition programme.
YouGov polling earlier this year showed that young adults were least likely to say that democracy was serving them well. The Commandery's new Democracy learning session was launched this year and was very popular with schools and we aim to develop this further in years to come so that Worcestershire's young people can feel more involved and able to influence decision-makers.
- This was the first year where we regularly surveyed visitors and event participants using the UCL wellbeing framework to assess the health impact of a museum visit. Overall a visit or participation improved an individual's wellbeing by 14% on average, and the impact of the surveyed sessions has enabled us to learn more about where our resources can have the most impact for residents. It was particularly motivating to see that participants in the Holiday Activity & Food programme (all local children eligible for free school meals) showed significant increase in wellbeing by taking part in the sessions – several started the day with very unhappy scores, but almost all left scoring their happiness levels at the maximum level.
- Partnership opportunities were able to resume properly, with a Covid-benefit that our experience and facilities for video discussions makes partnership working easier for the future. The Skyscape exhibition at Worcester Art Gallery included partnerships with local photographers and the University of Worcester Fine Art department, and members of the museum team and staff from the British Museum were able to participate in a knowledge exchange, with skills sharing happening both ways and feeding into collections and activities research.

3.3 Important milestones have been achieved in 2021-22, preparing the service for the future. The fundraising charity Worcestershire Heritage, Art & Museums is registered and up and running, and its first major donation has been received from Professor Olsen. 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.

4 Implications

4.2 Financial and Budgetary Implications

Activity highlighted within the Annual Review 2021-22 was funded from the annual agreed core budget and just under £300,000 of work that were externally funded.

4.3 Legal and Governance Implications

There are no legal and governance implications to this report.

4.4 Risk Implications

Risks of Museums Worcestershire's work are assessed and monitored using both authorities' risk management procedures and systems.

4.5 Corporate/Policy Implications

There are no corporate or policy implications to this report.

4.6 Equality Implications

There are no identified equality implications to this report.

4.7 Human Resources Implications

There are no human resources implications to this report.

4.8 Health and Safety Implications

There are no health and safety implications to this report.

4.9 Social, Environmental and Economic Implications

There are no negative social, environmental and economic implications to the highlighted work. The Annual Review 2020-21 contains information on positive impacts of museums' work.

Ward(s):

All wards

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Appendices:

Appendix 1: Draft 21-22 Annual Review

Appendix 2: Performance 2021-22