



Report to: Place and Economic Development Committee, 25th July 2022

Report of: Museums Manager

Subject: MUSEUMS WORCESTERSHIRE ANNUAL REVIEW

1. Recommendation

1.1 That the committee note the activities undertaken in museums in 2021-22 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 2021-22 was approved by the Joint Museums Committee at their June meeting and recommended for presentation to this committee.

3.2 The report highlights the impact that museums make in the City and County, illustrated through information, comments from users and performance figures.

3.3 Recovery post-Covid to the Museums Worcestershire museums has been more rapid than the national picture, with visit numbers only slightly down on 2019 despite sites still being locked down in April and May 2021. Some months saw record numbers, even when visitors were carefully managed to minimise Covid risk. This compares to the major national museums seeing 73% fewer visitors in 2021 than 2019. As a result the economic impact of secondary spend from our museum visitors on the local economy increased from all previous years to £2million.

- 3.4 Museums used core council funding to lever in an additional £300k in external funding, enabling additional activities in museums and programmes out in the community that support local residents.
- 3.5 The service has also prepared for the future. City Plan allocated to museums by this committee has this year supported the development of
- an Escape Room experience at The Commandery, due to open later in 2022, and
 - the blockbuster exhibition *Canaletto – A Venetian’s View* at the Art Gallery, opening 1 Oct 2022

Both of these offer learning on the longer-term business models for the City museums, including both user-paid-for and free-to-access elements of the service.

- 3.6 The museums are involved in initiatives from Visit Worcestershire and Visit Worcester to further boost visitors back to the city and county.
- 3.7 The fundraising charity Worcestershire Heritage, Art & Museums is registered and supported by independent trustees and its first major donation towards the City’s Art collection and gallery has been received.
- 3.8 Townsfunding has been allocated to develop the City’s museums through the ‘Heritage & Riverside’ project, representing a new phase in the destination attraction at The Commandery, and the start of development to improve the City’s facilities at the Art Gallery & Museum.

Ward(s): All wards
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Supporting Documents: Museums Worcestershire Annual Review 21-22