

**Museum Governance Review Annual Update**

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Heritage, Culture and Leisure
<b>Lead Head of Service/Lead Director</b>	John Foster
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Victoria Barlow
<b>Classification</b>	Public
<b>Wards affected</b>	All

**Executive Summary**

This report considers the desirability of transferring governance of the museum to a charitable trust and proposes a method to make that option more likely within a limited budget and timescale.

**This report makes the following recommendations to Heritage, Culture and Leisure Committee**

1. That members approve a programme to carry out improvements to the museum using the current capital budget of £389,000 in order to make the museum more attractive to quality trustees.

**Timetable**

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
HCL	2nd April 2019

# Museum Governance Review Annual Update

## 1. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 1.1 In June 2017 members voted to retain the governance of Maidstone Museums. A report to committee at that time considered the options for finding a method of governance for Maidstone Museums. In summary, the report found that, while transfer to a Charitable Trust would bring many, longer-term, strategic advantages to the museums, it would not benefit the council as a whole since financial investment would be required at a time when savings were being sought. Nor was the museum operating at a level that would attract quality trustees willing to take on the running of a new trust. Thus members elected to retain the museums for the present but members required that officers continue to monitor the museum sector, any changes to Trust Status and anything that might cause the decision to be reconsidered.
- 1.2 In the intervening period, officers noted the transfer or imminent transfer of museum services in Brighton and Hove and Fleetwood. Brighton and Hove have been preparing for this move for up to 5 years in a bid to save £400,000. However, presence of a major tourist attraction, in the form of the Royal Pavilion, will provide support for the other museums around Brighton and Hove. Maidstone is not in a comparable position. Fleetwood Museum in Lancashire will be joining an existing cultural trust of the kind which does not currently exist in a suitable area for Maidstone museums.
- 1.3 Work has begun to make Maidstone Museums a more appealing product for a trust to take on. Public and stakeholder consultation has been carried out across the borough on what the future museum should be like. We have developed a framework for stories to be told with a two-fold approach telling, first, the story of the borough in chronological order and, second, the stories of the World Collections, their significance and how they came to Maidstone. This framework was presented to members in October 2018. Work has also begun on the project management and logistics of a museum transformation. Procurement is underway for an Employers Agent (EA) who will work with officers to plan the necessary adjustments to the building layout and services.
- 1.4 It had always been assumed that a major funding partner in any transformation would be the Heritage Lottery Fund. There has, unfortunately, been no opportunity for further discussions with this organisation as they closed to new projects for almost a year. The new National Lottery Heritage Fund was launched in March 2019 and officers are able, once the work with Employers Agent has been completed, to submit an expression of interest which will give us an idea whether making a full bid is worthwhile.
- 1.5 However, members should note that there is still some level of risk in this process. It is possible to spend significant time and money in the preparation of a bid and the museum would need to raise 10% of any

project cost. The museum has a capital budget of £389,000 currently profiled over 3 years. After fees for the Employers Agent and for Exhibition Design Studio a sum of £300,000 might be available to match fund a bid to the Heritage Fund. This would mean the Museum could bid for a maximum of £3m. Should a more ambitious bid be considered the Maidstone Museums Foundation (MMF) could be asked to raise say £200,000 so that a bid of £5m could be submitted. However the actual costs of the works will be informed by the EA.

- 1.6 There is a significant risk that a bid to the Heritage Fund would not be successful and that MMF are unable to raise the additional match funding. This risk could be avoided by not seeking match funding and committing to a programme of improvements which could be carried out within the current capital allowance. The benefit of this is that members would have certainty around the final scope, timescale and cost of the project.

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## **2. AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 2.1 The 'do nothing' option in this instance would be to continue with officers' current plans; the development of the design masterplan, recruitment of community partners and the preparation of a large scale bid to the National Lottery Heritage Fund. The benefit of this route is that it would result in a truly transformational project to create a museum service meeting the vision laid out in the 20 Year Plan as previously adopted by members.
- 2.2 The major drawback to this scheme is the risk of a bid to the Heritage Fund failing which would still leave the museum in a state that was not trust-ready. Even should the bids succeed, this is not a 'quick win' answer and work will take a significant time to complete. This brings the additional risk that the £389,000 capital budget isn't spent over the next 3 years. This would leave the museum open to the threat of the money being reinvested elsewhere due to non-delivery.
- 2.3 In its current version, a scheme for Maidstone Museums would require 3 months' work with the Employers' Agent (who will be appointed by the end of March 2019) and a similar amount of time to get an initial project design from an Exhibition Design Studio which means the window for a Stage One application would be November 2019 with a March 2020 decision. A positive decision at this point would allow for a developmental and test phase looking at repairs, accessibility and structural changes to the building, exhibition design and working with external experts and our community to create the 'final product'. This may take anything up to 2 years. A second round application would then be made to implement this plan. This is a competitive round so, just because a project is successful at Round One, there is no guarantee of success at Round Two. If the scheme was successful, there would be a maximum of 5 years allowable to complete all the works but this would be more likely achievable in 2-3 years.
- 2.4 The second option would be to use the Museum's current capital fund of £389,000 to carry out improvements to existing galleries. It is quite realistic to suggest that a MMF fundraising campaign could bring this total up to

500,000. In order to contextualise what is possible, the Ancient Lives Gallery, education room, new lift and toilet opened in 2017 at a cost in the region of £200,000.

- 2.5 Previous designs for a new café space were based on a full refurbishment and increased customer base. The withdrawal of DAGT from the museum café contract means that the catering offer for the museum would need to be reconsidered and the previous designs should be shelved.
- 2.6 There is a possibility that were we to reduce the number of display galleries (there are currently 11), the museum storage and office functions could be improved within this sum.
- 2.7 The benefit of this option is that the timescale for improvements would be reduced and the scope of the project more easily managed. The project could be carried out in 12-24 months. This level of certainty may be enough to attract trustees to a museum trust.
- 2.8 The drawback would be that this scheme would not deliver the transformational change previously identified as necessary to turn around the museum's prospects and some of the issues affecting access to the building and collections could not be addressed.
- 2.9 The third option would be to proceed to attempt setting up a trust immediately. However, since nothing has materially changed in the sector or in the museum's situation since the option was rejected by committee in 2017, this would be inadvisable.

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### **3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 Officers recommend the implementation of option 2.
- 3.2 Whilst this option would not, in itself, deliver the entire vision laid out in the 20 Year Plan, it would have several immediate benefits:
  - The scope of the project would be clear from the start
  - The project would be shorter in duration
  - An improved museum would be more trust-ready
  - Further improvements could be carried out later as funding was available

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### **4. RISK**

- 4.1 The main risk associated with this option is that the possible level of refurbishment is not enough to attract new visitors, increased income and potential trustees.
- 4.2 The risks associated with this proposal, including the risks if the Council does not act as recommended, have been considered in line with the Council's Risk Management Framework. We are satisfied that the risks

associated are within the Council’s risk appetite and will be managed as per the Policy.

## 5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 Six public and several stakeholder consultation events have taken place in order to develop the future museum offer as stated in section 1.3

## 6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 On the approval of option 2, it will be necessary to revisit the Transformation action plan in order to prioritise the steps which may be taken within the budget and which elements will not be progressed.
- 6.2 A new action plan with timescales will then be produced and the most likely funding partners identified.

## 7. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We expect the recommendations will support the Council’s overall achievement of its Corporate Priorities to achieve “A vibrant leisure and culture offer, enjoyed by residents and attractive to visitors” and the specific action “Development and commencement of delivering the new gallery at the Museum</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Risk Management</b>	Refer to paragraph 4	John Foster
<b>Financial</b>	<p>The proposals set out in the recommendation are all within already approved budgetary headings and so need no new funding for implementation.</p> <p>In fact, the amount of external</p>	Paul Holland, Senior Finance Manager (Client)

	funding to be delivered will be significantly lower than expected.	
<b>Staffing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.</li> </ul>	John Foster
<b>Legal</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepting the recommendations will fulfil the Council's duties under [act]. Failure to accept the recommendations without agreeing suitable alternatives may place the Council in breach of [act].</li> <li>Acting on the recommendations is within the Council's powers as set out at [x].</li> </ul>	[Legal Team]
<b>Privacy and Data Protection</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Accepting the recommendations will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with [policy].</li> </ul>	[Legal Team]
<b>Equalities</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment</li> </ul>	[Policy & Information Manager]
<b>Public Health</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>We recognise that the recommendations will have a positive impact on population health or that of individuals.</li> </ul>	Victoria Barlow
<b>Crime and Disorder</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The recommendation will have a minimal impact on Crime and Disorder.</li> </ul>	Victoria Barlow

<p><b>Procurement</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• On accepting the recommendations, the Council will then follow procurement exercises for the relevant parts of the action. We will complete those exercises in line with financial procedure rules.</li> <li>•</li> </ul>	<p>[Head of Service &amp; Section 151 Officer]</p>
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## **8. REPORT APPENDICES**

There are no appendices to this report

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## **9. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

The museum 20 Year Plan is available at <https://museum.maidstone.gov.uk/our-museums/20-year-plan/>