

## Maidstone Museums Development Plan

<b>Final Decision-Maker</b>	Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee
<b>Lead Head of Service</b>	Head of Commercial and Economic Development
<b>Lead Officer and Report Author</b>	Shared Museums Manager, Jo Wiltcher
<b>Classification</b>	Private
<b>Wards affected</b>	N/A

### This report makes the following recommendations to the final decision-maker:

1. To note the progress on the staff restructure, the appointment of a new full time Museums Director and the museum improvements programme.
2. To agree to the formation of a Museums Strategic Board to develop and oversee delivery of a 20 year Strategic Plan for the Museum Service.
3. To support the appointment of the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee to serve on the Museums Strategic Board.
4. To agree the first phase capital programme outlined for inclusion in the Councils capital programme which will go to Policy and Resources on 27 January 2016.

### This report relates to the following corporate priorities: *(please explain how your report relates to either or both of these, delete as appropriate)*

- Keeping Maidstone Borough an attractive place for all –
  - Encouraging good health & wellbeing
- Securing a successful economy for Maidstone Borough –
  - Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions
  - Enhancing the appeal of the town centre for everyone

### Timetable

<b>Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Heritage, Culture & Leisure Committee	05/01/2016
Policy & Resources	27/01/2016

# Maidstone Museums Strategic Plan

## 1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the proposals to restructure Maidstone Museum's Service to provide an efficient, fit for purpose team that can provide the best possible service to the museums customers and can grow to meet MBC's future aspirations for the service.
  - 1.2 It sets out a new base budget for 2016/7 that takes into account the zero based budget exercise that has been conducted with Finance and seeks to address the on-going shortfall in the museums base budget and the end of the Arts Council funded Museums in Schools programme which provided £108,000 per annum toward the provision of a learning service.
  - 1.3 An outline of a proposal to develop a 20 year strategic plan is also provided including the proposal to establish a Maidstone Museums Strategic Board.
  - 1.4 A capital programme is proposed which will ensure that the museums operational capacity and potential to generate income in the future is maximised.
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## 2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 18 August 2015 a briefing was taken to Corporate Leadership Team (CLT), which summarised the work to date on:
    - The forensic review of the museums budget undertaken with Finance.
    - A new zero based budget for the museums.
    - Staff restructure proposals.
    - Recommendations from the front of house review conducted in January 2015.
  - 2.2 That report demonstrated that the museums budget had overspent for the past three years and was predicting an overspend in 2015/16 of c. £60k. This figure has since been partly mitigated by the income generated from the Brick City paid for exhibition.
  - 2.3 A further report to CLT on 26 October set out the options for the future running of the museum service. CLT asked officers to proceed with the development of a new structure, subject to budget approval, which addressed the overspend and suggested a fit for purpose staffing structure which would enable the continuation of a learning service, and appointment of a full time Museums Director.
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## 3. WHAT HAS ALREADY BEEN DONE?

- 3.1 Following a front of house review in November 2014, and a wider service review in July/August 2015, a number of recommendations have been made

to improve the efficiency of the museums service and the ability of the museum team to have greater impact for our communities, for Maidstone Borough and for Kent and the South East.

- 3.2 In addition, the need to maintain a learning service beyond April 2016 and to continue to achieve the Arts Council Accreditation standard has been a key driver in the wider review of budgets and staffing structures. Significant investment from Arts Council through the museums in schools programme over the last four years has given us a raised profile and acclaim in the sector and increased visitor numbers, both of which we would like to maintain.
- 3.3 On the 16 December 2015 Policy & Resources Committee agreed to support an increased budget for the museums of £125,000 per annum. The increase in budget will be introduced to the base line budget over 3 financial years – 2016/17 - £25 000, 2017/18 - £50,000 and £2018/19 - £50,000. This is still subject to budget approval from full council March 2016.
- 3.4 This sum will bridge the gap in the museums baseline budget of £60,450 for non-controllable costs as identified by a zero based budget exercise undertaken with Finance earlier this year. It will also enable the continued delivery and growth of a sustainable museum service, and essentially will provide a continued education service post 31 March 16 when the Arts Council funding comes to an end.
- 3.5 Resources have already been identified to fund the new post of a full time Museums Director when the current arrangements of a shared Museums Manager with Tonbridge Wells come to an end at 31 March 2016.

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#### **4. MUSEUM 20 YEAR DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

- 4.1 This report recommends that a Strategic Board is convened to shape a vision for the museums service for the next 20 years and to oversee delivery of that vision. The vision should link to Maidstone Borough Council's (MBC) strategic plan and in particular to the Culture & Heritage Positioning Statement and Destination Management's Plan's ambitions to grow Maidstone as a cultural and heritage destination and broaden its appeal to visitors.
- 4.2 The vision should reflect Maidstone's status as one of the largest museum services in Kent, with the largest collection in Kent, some of which is of international significance.
- 4.3 The vision should be ambitious, seeking to re-gain the position of Maidstone Museum as the county museum service and to become one of the South East's hub services.
- 4.4 Maidstone Museum should be a flagship museum service and a nationally recognised tourist destination; a service that is well used by the local community and of which they are proud; but which also draws audiences

from across the country forming the cornerstone of Maidstone's tourist economy.

- 4.5 To achieve this vision, the museum service will need to be attaining best practice in the following areas:
- Curatorship, interpretation and access to collection.
  - Visitor experience and audience development.
  - Entrepreneurship and ongoing sustainability.
  - Leadership in the sector and ability to be mentor smaller services.

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## **5. MARKETING, SPONSORSHIP AND COMMERCIAL ACTIVITY**

- 5.1 There will be three elements to the museums marketing strategy which will maximise the promotion of the museum, increase visitor numbers and generate sales and sponsorship.
- a) *Integrated marketing* will link the major marketing factors that have a significant influence on customers and marketing intermediaries.
  - b) *Relationship Marketing* will focus on going beyond 'making a sale' to build up a set of relationships with donors, visitors, members, stakeholders and the local community that will result in support over a long period of time.
  - c) *Internal marketing* will be undertaken to influence staff members and other sections to be consumer centred.
- 5.2 A new marketing plan will be designed to enable the Museum to achieve its goals. It will focus on all potential consumers and decide how much effort to devote to each consumer group, and design the positioning and value for each group. The marketing activities will create, communicate and deliver value for consumers.
- 5.3 A mix of marketing methods will be used including:
- a) Flyers, PR, advertising in the press, magazines, online media, outdoor poster sites, banners and search engines to create awareness.
  - b) Direct marketing and interactive communications via email aimed to move from mass communications to more personalised communications so that relationship with the museum's consumers can be built.
  - c) Sales promotion, public relations and personal selling will also be used to engage directly with the audience who have expressed an interest in the museum. Sales promotion will be used to in the promotion of the retail offer, and personal selling of the museum spaces for hire, events and the children's parties.
- 5.4 A new Museum website has been commissioned, the design and build have started and launch is planned for end of February 2016.

The site will be a fully responsive allowing visitors greater usability on mobile and tablet devices. It will reflect the museums aim to be the best museum in the south east and will be stylish, inviting and informative, yet practical.

In addition to the information currently available the new site will provide:

- A highly attractive visual representation of the museum
- More flexibility to change content and images
- Better navigation and internal links around the sight
- Improved search ending ranking through search engine optimisation
- More information about museum exhibitions, events and the collections
- The ability for allow visitors to undertake actions and transactions including searching the collections database
- Online booking and payment for school visits, events, children's parties and workshops
- Information on and registration and payment for the Maidstone Museums Foundation (MMF)
- Sign up to receive the museum e-newsletters.
- In a later phase it will offer e-commerce through an online shop.

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## **6 FINANCE AND CAPITAL PROGRAMME OF IMPROVEMENTS AND REPAIRS**

- 6.3 A bid was made to the Council's 2014/15 underspend for essential capital works at the museum which included the East Wing reception, flooring and ceiling; Withdrawing Room floor; Cabinet Dimming and the Vic Cellar humidification works.
- 6.4 £37K was allocated which will enable us to improve the East wing reception and complete cabinet dimming works. The cabinet dimming work is now complete and works to improve the East Wing reception will commence in January 2016. The stripping out of the existing reception desk and replacement with a new desk in a new location will help us resolve a number of issues. The current desk is poorly located, creating a pinch point for visitors entering the building and creating a situation where staff who are serving in the shop have their backs to customers entering the site. The Visitor Information service is not prominent and it is difficult to service the Visitor Information service when the shop is busy. As well as a new reception desk with fit for purpose workspaces including a 'back of office' space, these works will enable a more prominent Visitor Information service area and an additional portable shop 'pod' which can be used in busy times. Visitor services, visitor flow and the 'welcome' will be much improved by these works. This work should be complete by 31 March 2016
- 6.5 The remaining works and other capital projects that will facilitate the most efficient running of the museum and maximise the potential for income generation, are included in Appendix I with indicative costs allocated to the projects for inclusion in the Council's capital programme. The first phase of this work amounts to £353,000 and Committee are being asked to support this bid to the Council's Capital Programme.
- 6.6 The projects listed for 2016-18 address immediate concerns: firstly improvements to the building which will improve the efficiency of staff by enabling them to multi-task and take on additional tasks during quiet time. These works include creating a second workspace/reception area at the old

reception area and re-routing CCTV to the old reception desk. Secondly, improvements are suggested that will increase our ability to income generate and draw more visitors into the building. These works include refurbishing the 'old education room' to meet the standards of the learning studio which doubles our capacity for delivering children's parties and improves the learning offer. Also suggested are works to improve the ambiance of the café and improvements to the outside of the building to attract visitors.

- 6.7 A further capital programme to reflect the ambition of the emerging 20 Year Strategic Plan is also set out in draft in part two of Appendix I.
- 6.8 These works are key to fully realising the museums potential and to addressing larger concerns with the buildings. Projects within this section address DDA issues, heating and environment in the central and West wing of the building, the need to consider position of the café, visitor flow and redisplay of the galleries. The Strategic plan should seek to consider how these issues can be addressed in conjunction with gallery redisplays that can attract outside investment and provide value for money for MBCs investment. The carriage museum and its future location should also been considered within the strategic plan.

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## **7 IMPLEMENTATION AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS**

- 7.1 Recruitment of a full time Museums Director has already commenced with interviews scheduled for January 2016. It is proposed that the new Museums Strategic Board participate in the interview process, receiving a presentation from shortlisted candidates with feedback included as part the selection process.
- 7.2 The new Museums Director will complete the implementation of the restructure to improve efficiency and staff coherence, and will lead and inspire the team to deliver the vision. The Museum's Director will also represent MBC at regional and national level, and be able to advocate to funders, stakeholder and policy makers. Critically the post holder will lead the investment and income strategy to secure its full potential.
- 7.3 Informal consultation with staff on the proposed structural changes has already commenced and formal consultation will now begin.
- 7.4 Proposed members for the new Museums Strategic Board have been informally approached to ascertain their appetite for joining the Board. They have been identified for their ability to help develop and deliver the 20 Year Development Plan, their potential to support funding applications and leverage investment and their connections in the museums, culture and heritage environment.
- 7.5 It is proposed that the Board includes the following people:
- Maidstone Borough Council – Chair of Policy & Resources
  - Maidstone Borough Council - Head of Commercial and Economic Development

- Kent County Council Arts and Regeneration Officer – Lucy Keeley
  - Arts Council England Relationship Manager – Michael Cooke
  - South East Museums Development Officer – Sarah Corn
  - Maidstone Museums Foundation Chair – Mark Baker
  - Heritage Lottery – to be confirmed
  - Royal Society of Arts – to be confirmed
  - Visit Kent – to be confirmed
  - A selection of key local business people.
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## **8 AVAILABLE OPTIONS**

- 8.1 To note the progress on the staff restructure, the appointment of a new full time Museums Director and the museum improvements programme.
  - 8.2 To agree to the formation of a Museums Strategic Board to develop and oversee delivery of a 20 year Strategic Plan for the Museum Service.
  - 8.3 To support the appointment of the Chair of Policy & Resources Committee to serve on the Museums Strategic Board.
  - 8.4 To agree the first phase capital programme outlined for inclusion in the Councils capital programme which will go to Policy and Resources on 27 January 2016.
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## **9 PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 9.1 The recommended option set out at section 8 will allow us to deliver an improved museum service and continue the education programme. The increased capacity at Museum Director level will enable development and growth of the Museums Service and the maximisation of investment and income strategy.
  - 9.2 This new budget resolves many of the current budget pressures and provides a fit for purpose service, including the appointment of a new full time Museums Director and an on-going education service post 31 March 16. It will enable the strategic leadership and growth in profile on a regional and national level and the implementation of more realistic commercial activity. It also enables a move toward growth of the service and improved visitor experience.
  - 9.3 Loss of the learning service would have serious implications and would see a huge drop in visitor numbers and associated drop in shop income, reduced demand and spend for holiday activities and reduced income from children's parties. It would also see the loss of Accreditation status which impacts reputation and ability to fundraise from grant giving bodies such as Arts Council England and Heritage Lottery Fund in the future.
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## **10 NEXT STEPS**

- 10.1 Agree the Museums Service Plan for 2016/17.

10.2 Approval of the capital programme by Policy and Resources on 17 February 2016.

10.3 Interview for the post of full-time Museums Director January 2016.

10.4 Set up the Museums Strategic Board.

10.5 Produce the Museums 20 Year Development Plan.

10.6 Consultation with key stakeholders on the draft Museums 20 Year Development Plan.

## 11 CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
<b>Impact on Corporate Priorities</b>	The museum is extremely important in delivering the Councils corporate priority: Ensuring there are good leisure and cultural attractions. A reduction in service will compromise the offer.	Head of Commercial & Economic Development
<b>Risk Management</b>	By not supporting the funding increases recommended in this report MBC carries the risk of reputational damage, loss of ACE Accreditation and damage to the visitor economy.	Head of Commercial & Economic Development
<b>Financial</b>	All options in this report have financial implications for the Council.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
<b>Staffing</b>	All options carry staffing implications and a full consultation will be conducted as part of implementing the agreed new structure.	Head of Commercial & Economic Development
<b>Legal</b>	There may be implications for our agreements with the museums various Trusts. It is recommended that close and early consultation is undertaken with the relevant trustees about both immediate plans and the 20 year development plan.	Deputy Head of the Legal Partnership
<b>Equality Impact Needs Assessment</b>	This will be undertaken when the option has been agreed.	Policy & Information



		Manager
<b>Environmental/Sustainable Development</b>	N/A	
<b>Community Safety</b>	N/A	
<b>Human Rights Act</b>	N/A	
<b>Procurement</b>	There are no direct implications in this report. The procurement of any capital improvements will be conducted in accordance with the Council's Constitution.	Property & Procurement Manager
<b>Asset Management</b>	An efficient and well run facility aligns with the Council's Asset Management Plan	Property & Procurement Manager

## **12 REPORT APPENDICES**

The following documents are to be published with this report and form part of the report:

- Appendix I: Museums Capital Improvement Programme

## **13 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

**None.**