

**Maidstone Museum Savings and Restructure Progress
Report**

Final Decision-Maker	Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee
Lead Head of Service	John Foster, Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Lead Officer and Report Author	Victoria Barlow, Museum Director
Classification	Public
Wards affected	ALL

Executive Summary

The new arrangements at the museum are generally going very well and the service has had a strong re-opening period after Covid.

Progress over the first six months of implementation has been a matter of adjustment and refinement and has had a rather reactive focus as we settled into a very new situation. The savings required are on track and the meeting of revised income targets will be carefully monitored over the financial year.

For staff, the process has been challenging but it has also brought forward many suggestions of new ways to deliver the service and focus efforts where they produce real benefits. Over the second half of the year and beyond, the focus will be on bringing staff together with a reinvigorated sense of purpose and new goals to encourage a positive outlook for the future.

Purpose of Report

To note the progress made in Maidstone Museums in achieving Medium Term Financial Strategy targets and restructure.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

That the report be noted.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee	19/10/2021

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1. CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES AND IMPLICATIONS

Issue	Implications	Sign-off
Impact on Corporate Priorities	<p>The four Strategic Plan objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embracing Growth and Enabling Infrastructure • Safe, Clean and Green • Homes and Communities • A Thriving Place <p>This report supports the objective A Thriving Place.</p>	Museum Director
Cross Cutting Objectives	<p>The four cross-cutting objectives are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Heritage is Respected • Health Inequalities are Addressed and Reduced • Deprivation and Social Mobility is Improved • Biodiversity and Environmental Sustainability is respected <p>The report supports the achievement(s) of the Heritage is Respected cross cutting objectives by ensuring an efficient and well-run museum.</p>	Museum Director
Risk Management	The report is for noting	Museum Director
Financial	The report describes how Maidstone Museums have delivered MTFS budget savings. The Council has relied on these savings in order to set a balanced budget, so their successful delivery is to be welcomed.	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	We will deliver the recommendations with our current staffing.	Head of Regeneration and

		Economic Development
Legal	No legal implications identified.	Senior Lawyer, Corporate Governance
Privacy and Data Protection	We will hold data in line with our retention schedules.	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals.	Public Health Officer
Crime and Disorder	The recommendation will have no impact on Crime and Disorder.	Museum Director
Procurement	No procurement will be required as a result of this report	Head of Service & Section 151 Officer
Biodiversity and Climate Change	As part of the Biodiversity and Climate Change Action Plan and need to reduce MBC's buildings carbon footprint to Net Zero by 2030 the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager is currently looking in to upgrading the Museums heating systems, energy efficiency and sustainable power generation. These upgrades while moving away from a dependency on fossil fuels and reducing the carbon footprint of the Museum, will also reduce the amount of energy needed to heat the building and should in the long terms save money on energy bills. Furthermore, as part of these upgrades, the Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager is looking into the potential of placing solar PV panels on the museum roof, either to reduce the need for grid electricity or as a supplementary income by producing energy via the museum. Please note that Solar PV will be in keeping with the heritage and grade listing of the building and all upgrades will be kept to a minimum or hidden where possible. These upgrades are pending a feasibility study.	Biodiversity and Climate Change Manager

2.0 INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1 Background

2.2 The purpose of this report is to advise Members of progress towards the savings target identified and agreed in 2020. At Policy and Resources Committee on 25th November 2020, it was resolved that the measures agreed at ERL Committee on 12th November be implemented:

1. To produce revenue savings of £152,000, £138k arising from a reduction in opening hours to take effect by April 2021 and the balance from a package of other actions to take effect by April 2022
2. Access to the main Museum's collections is maintained
3. Any changes made are reversible
4. The Museum's Accreditation Status is maintained; and
5. Volunteers be at the heart of Maidstone Museum's model.
- 6 That an annualised hours system of working would be introduced equivalent to opening 4 days a week.

2.3 A formal process of staff consultation, guided by Human Resources, enabled the restructure to be implemented by April 2021. The full saving of £138,000 was achieved although this is subject to the Council's Payment Protection Policy, so the full saving will not be made until year 3.

2.4 The Museum's non Visitor Services team now work 4 days a week. The Front of House team, through the introduction of the annualised opening model now work a rota which allows the Museum to open on the following basis:

- Mid-February to Mid-December open 4 days a week except during school holidays when it is open 6 days a week.
- Mid-December to early-February the museum is closed to visitors.
- Carriage Museum is open by appointment only

2.5 From 1st April 2021, the following posts were deleted:

- Collections Documentation Assistant
- Visitor Services Supervisor
- Visitor Experience Officer x 2 seasonal
- Casual Visitor Experience Officer (s)

2.6 The Collections Documentation Assistant was found alternative employment within the Council. The Visitor Services Supervisor found a new job outside of the Council before the restructure process was complete. All other posts were vacant. No compulsory redundancies were made.

2.7 It should be noted that the Learning Team remain full time as they are funded by a grant from the Arts Council. This remains a potential threat to

the service as this is grant is always only for one year and may not be renewed.

- 2.8 All non-Visitor services staff are now given a Duty Officer role on rota. The purpose is to ensure a central point of contact for staff now that there are fewer staff in the museum at any one time. Additionally, non-Visitor staff also cover their Visitor Experience colleagues at peak times on weekends (again on rota) and during any absences. Saturday working is carried out on a TOIL basis. This practice has greatly improved the team's understanding of the museum and its visitors at a time they do not usually work but does mean that staff TOIL has to be managed very carefully.
- 2.9 One issue that became clear over the busy school holiday is the need for greater resilience during peak periods in order to ensure cover is available for sickness and other absence, and staff numbers are sufficient for the emergency evacuation procedure. A budget increase may be required here.
- 2.10 By 31st August 2021, four out of five members of Visitor Experience Team staff had resigned, with three of these stating that the requirements of the annualised hours contract were at least one consideration in their decision to leave. The contract currently requires front of house staff to work 6 days a week during the summer school holidays with no leave. In contrast, these staff are not required to work from mid-December to mid-February. It was always clear that the specific details of the new arrangements might need to be assessed and reviewed after implementation and staff turnover was identified in the Risk Assessment for the restructure. Although recruitment is underway to replace these members of staff, it is our intention to review the arrangements to see if there is any flexibility in the requirement to work 6 day shifts for the whole of the summer school holidays but also to best consider how we keep the team engaged during the closed period.
- 2.11 Impact on Services
- 2.12 No formal feedback has been received from visitors or non-visitors on the effects of these changes and no complaints, but we will be monitoring general satisfaction with the service through visitor surveys and other opportunities to comment.
- 2.13 Research visits by students and specialists have been halted as we no longer have the staff available to accompany researchers while working with collections. This decision was taken because, although a few researchers each year may make a significant contribution to their field or our knowledge of our collections however the majority of visits are from students or non-professional researchers.
- 2.14 Individual photographic reproductions have been halted and all available images are currently being moved to Bridgeman Images which manages the reproduction and licensing of our images for a fee.
- 2.15 The events programme has been reduced. The monthly Lates have been reduced to 4 a year as we no longer have budget to pay staff out of hours

nor the flexibility to award Time Off In Lieu (TOIL) at previous levels. Other events, such as the Halloween Tour and History Mystery Tours, were previously provided by staff who volunteered time outside work to rehearse etc.

- 2.16 There is a moratorium on all collecting of new artefacts due to the capacity of the Collections Team to properly administer new donations.
- 2.17 Further Savings for 2022 onwards
- 2.18 Further revenue savings of £14,000 have been identified and while income generation has been seriously impacted by continuing Covid measures, the museum has secured a grant of £35,000 from DCMS to backfill this lost income in 2021-2022 and expects income to recover further in 2022-23.
- 2.19 The Maidstone Museums Foundation is contributing to the desired increase in income through the provision of a contactless donations machine in the museum and a portable version for use in their Pop-Up shop in Fremlin Walk, at external events and at events such as the annual Carol Concert. Their goal is to raise £14,000 per year which will be returned to the museum on a quarterly basis. The machines will formally accept donations to the MMF as research shows that donors would rather give to a charity than to a statutory body such as the Council. These are expected to be in place by mid-October 2021.



- 2.20 The new donation machines have been purchased by MMF and it is they who will cover on-going costs of servicing and software. The branding will be as shown above.

2.21 Implementation of new opening hours and visitation

2.22 The museum re-opened to visitors on May 19th 2021 after a second COVID lockdown. Between then and 31st August, almost 20,000 visits were made.

19 May 2021- 31 st May	494
June	2,521
July	5,847
August	10,138
TOTAL	19,878

2.23 In large part this was due to the popularity of the Elmer Trail and the 'Learning Herd' of elephants in the museum and an exhibition of Star Wars related memorabilia. However, it is also likely that the increased opening to six days a week during school holidays contributed to this success. It is clear from daily figures that visitation was spread across all days of the week, including the newly introduced Mondays.



2.24 In comparison, the last full year of operation, 2019, saw a total of 26,117 visits.

2.25 Maidstone Carriage Museum

2.26 Maidstone Carriage Museum is currently closed except by appointment for groups, at a minimum cost of £150 for groups of 10. Options for its future operation are being explored and an appraisal of these will be brought to committee in January 2022.

2.27 The immediate priority for the museum is to find a way to re-open the museum in a sustainable way which does not deny residents and visitors the opportunity to see an important local collection. Over the past twenty years several schemes have been put forward to re-house the carriages but it should be noted (and will be expanded on in the report) that the vehicles in the museum are currently acclimatised to the environment in the museum, which has had various improvements over the past few years and are in a stable condition. Moving them is not only a potentially

expensive and difficult procedure, but also runs a very high risk of causing deterioration in their condition, which is currently good and stable.

2.28 In the next six months we will be recruiting and training a team of Carriage Museum volunteers so that during the summer, the museum will reopen on a regular basis. It isn't possible to open all year round due to the unheated nature of the building but once a team is in place, they will have plenty of work to do when the colder months come.

2.29 Use of the Capital Allocation

2.30 The museum has a capital budget of £389,000. Work is ongoing to determine the best use of this budget in improving access to museum collections and bring an additional financial return. Proposals include the creation of a new Temporary Exhibition Gallery, creation of a new events space and the development of a new British Archaeology Gallery in partnership with Kent Archaeological Society, The William and Edith Oldham Trust and Maidstone Museums Foundation. The William and Edith Oldham Trust have made the generous offer of matched funding, up to £100,000 for sums raised by MMF from local support. It is proposed to bring a final report to ERL in November 2021

2.31 Growing the volunteer team

2.32 The major 'objective to underpin the future operational model for the museums' sought by members was the growth of the museums volunteer team. Although volunteers already work in most areas of museum operations including collections, exhibitions, learning and visitor services, members felt that this number could be grown in a sustainable manner to increase the museums' capacity.

2.33 Currently, no staff member has volunteer management in their Job Description and it has been carried out on an ad hoc basis. Since the recruitment and retention of volunteers will be critical in areas such as the already discussed Carriage Museum, a Revenue Growth request is to be submitted to create a small amount of capacity among the team for the development, training and management of volunteers across the museums. This will ensure the sustainability of the service and especially the Carriage Museum as it allows access by residents with only a very small investment. the potential benefits of engaging residents in our work as volunteers are great and may contribute to the well-being of volunteers, the development of new activities and events and increase the awareness and sense of local ownership of the museum.

2.34 South East Museums Development, funded by Arts Council England, have launched a project to help 8 museums develop their plans for volunteers. Maidstone Museums successfully applied and will receive online and in person training from October, as well as consultant support to create an action plan which will see the creation of new role descriptions and recruitment systems for volunteers as well as advising on retention and management of volunteers. A small grant of £500 will also be available to assist this work.

3. PREFERRED OPTION AND REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 The report is for noting the progress made in the first six months of implementation.
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4. RISK

- 4.1 This report is presented for information only and has no risk management implications.
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5. CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

- 5.1 See introduction 2.2
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6. NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

- 6.1 The report is for noting. A further report will be presented to ERL Committee on the options for the capital programme and for the future of the Carriage Museum.
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7. REPORT APPENDICES

None

8. BACKGROUND PAPERS

None