

Update on Timeline for Museum Gallery and Governance

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, Museums Director
Classification	Public
Wards affected	All

Executive Summary

This report lays out the estimated timescales for two museum projects- the refurbishment of the Archaeology displays in the Withdrawing Room between 2022 and 2025 and the review of governance for the museum in 2022.

Purpose of Report

This report makes clear the processes involved in each project and identifies for members the length of time necessary to complete each project with the resources available.

This report makes the following recommendations to this Committee:

1. That Members note the timescales herein.

Timetable

Meeting	Date
ERL	15 February 2022

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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>We do not expect the recommendations will by themselves materially affect achievement of corporate priorities.</p>	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
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 recommendation supports the achievement of the Heritage is Respected cross cutting objectives by laying out plans for improvement in the presentation of Maidstone’s history and in the governance of the museum service.</p>	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Risk Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No decision is needed 	Museums Director
Financial	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No decision is needed 	Section 151 Officer & Finance Team
Staffing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No decision is required 	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development

Legal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No decision is required 	Team Leader, Contracts and Commissioning
Privacy and Data Protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The projects described will increase the volume of data held by the Council. We will hold that data in line with our retention schedules. 	Policy and Information Team
Equalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendations do not propose a change in service therefore will not require an equalities impact assessment 	Equalities & Communities Officer
Public Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> We recognise that the recommendations will not negatively impact on population health or that of individuals. 	Healthy Lifestyles Officer
Crime and Disorder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The recommendation will not have a negative impact on Crime and Disorder. 	Museums Director
Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The report is for noting only 	Head of Regeneration and Economic Development
Biodiversity and Climate Change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The implications of this report on biodiversity and climate change have been considered and are; There are no implications on biodiversity and climate change. 	Museums Director

2. INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

2.1. At the Economic Regeneration and Leisure Committee (ERL) held in November 2021, members requested details of the timescales for two agreed projects - the refurbishment of displays telling the story of Maidstone's earliest history from the Mesolithic to late Mediaeval periods and the review of the museum's governance (as required three years after the decision of ERL in 2018 to adopt the status quo).

3. ARCHAEOLOGY GALLERY

3.1 The following assumptions have been made in producing this timetable:

- Major elements are shown.
- Current staffing levels and hours will be retained
- Current opening hours will be retained
- Work on the gallery is prioritised in staff objectives

3.2 The timeline has been produced using the previous experience of the professional museum team and by comparison with other museum refurbishments. For example a new gallery at Brighton Museum was opened in January 2019. The gallery it replaced was closed in May 2017 but prior to that there had been a period of negotiation with the funder during which time, research and other work had begun. In total the project took roughly three years which, a staff member acknowledged, was a challenge. At Corinium Museum in Colchester, the main gallery was refurbished with a two stage lottery bid which lasted 6 years from 2014-2020.

Work Area	Task(s)	Duration	Expected End Date
Preparation			
	Agreed PID	3 weeks	31 Mar 22
	Fundraising agreement in place	3 weeks	31 Mar 22
	Visits to Brighton and other archaeology galleries	20 weeks	30 Jul 22
	Identify recruit partners/stakeholders	8 weeks	28 March 22
	Works to Withdrawing Room floor	TBC	15 Feb 23
Research and Design	Identification and testing of main themes	16 weeks	31 May 22
	Detailed historical research	52 weeks	31 May 23
	Recruitment of exhibition designers (Design and Build contract preferred)	12 weeks	30 Sept 22
	Displays design development	64 weeks	31 Dec 24
	Object and Image research	30 weeks	31 Dec 24
	Exhibition main text development, writing and production	30 weeks	31 Dec 24
	Object and image caption writing and production	12 weeks	31 Dec 24
	Conservation of objects	12 weeks	31 Jan 25
Site works	Current gallery decant and documentation	8 weeks	28 Mar 23

	Gallery fit out	36 weeks	31 January 25
	Object installation	20 weeks	30 Apr 25
Opening	Official opening event		May/June 2025
Learning	Curriculum and learning links in gallery identified		
	New curriculum sessions devised	28 weeks	28 Feb 25
	New curriculum sessions tested and available to book	8 weeks	30 Apr 25
PR	PR campaign plan agreed	16 weeks	31 May 22
Community engagement	Identify roles for participants & recruit	12 weeks	30 Aug 22
	Archaeology themed public events	4 per year	Apr 25
	Resident and interest group meetings	6 per year	Apr 25
	Archaeology themed events	4 per year	Apr 25
Evaluation	Independent assessment of procedural elements and recommendations for future projects	12 weeks	Dec 25
	Independent assessment of the gallery against objectives and public feedback/reviews etc	12 weeks	May 26

4. MUSEUM GOVERNANCE REVIEW

- 4.1 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. Thus, members elected to retain the museums for the present but members also required that officers continue to monitor the museum sector, any changes to Trust Status and anything that might cause the decision to be reconsidered.
- 4.2 Four governance options recommended by Julie Cole, Governance Consultant, were considered by officers initially:
- Status quo.
 - Create a new charitable trust and transfer full management & operational responsibility. The museum collections and buildings would remain in the ownership of Maidstone Council so they could not be disposed of by the Trust without the permission of MBC. Staff and operations would be the responsibility of the Trust and defined through a Service Level Agreement.

- Partner with existing charity already managing a museum and transfer full management and operational responsibility- *This option was rejected as there is no potential partner able or willing to enter such an agreement.*
- Create a new charitable trust and transfer partial management & operational responsibility. *This option was rejected as it would create a two tier staffing structure with current staff remaining as MBC employees. This offered the Council no benefits but considerable liabilities.*

4.3 While each option offered different benefits and risks, an overall timescale for review can be shown as follows:

	TASKS	TIMESCALE*
Review of previous options	Review by external firm of Solicitors advising MBC of each option in light of any changes to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Legal requirements • Charity Commission Changes • Success of exemplar Trusts since 2017 	Solicitors have been instructed. 8 weeks
Decision	Report to ERL committee for decision allowing for writing, review and publication dates	8 weeks
Retain Status Quo	No further action required	N/A
OR		
Establishing Charitable Trust in agreed form	Initial independent trustee recruitment + training Submission of the Charity Commission application Charity Commission approval (8-20 weeks) Establishing banking and financial arrangements Establishing relevant policies Establishing contractual agreements re Collections and Buildings Agreements with Union and Staff re employment conditions	18-24 months

- *Timescales will be affected by length of time taken to recruit suitable consultant or take similar advice.*

5 RISK

Risks related to this matter were detailed in the report Museums Future Governance Options presented to committee on 6th March 2018. Since that report the risks identified have not significantly changed

6 CONSULTATION RESULTS AND PREVIOUS COMMITTEE FEEDBACK

Previous report made to committee Museums Future Governance Options on 6th March 2018.

7 NEXT STEPS: COMMUNICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECISION

Work can commence on both items immediately
