

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee

Cabinet

Date of Committee

02 February 2006

Report Title

Potential Tourist Information Facility in Market Hall Museum, Warwick

Summary

The possible integration of Warwick tourist information facilities into the Market Hall Museum, Warwick has been raised. Members are asked to note the issues raised and to authorise further investigation and negotiation.

For further information please contact:

Helen Maclagan
Head of Museum Service
Tel: 01926 418127
helenmaclagan@warwickshire.gov.uk

Christopher Jeens
Head of Heritage & Cultural Services
Tel: 01926 412329
chrisjeens@warwickshire.gov.uk

Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework?

No.

Background papers

Best Value Review of the Museum Service Strategy: Report to Cabinet, 17 October 2002

Update on Museum Service Best Value Review: Report to Cabinet, 3 April 2003

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-

Details to be specified

Other Committees

.....

Local Member(s)

Councillor R Randev – “I support the recommendations.”
Councillor K Browne – “This is certainly a proposal worth investigating, and I look forward to seeing future reports on feasibility.”

Other Elected Members

Councillor S Tooth – “Would appear to be of mutual benefit to Warwick District Council and Warwickshire County Council.”
Councillor R Dodd,
Councillor Mrs M Haywood – “Noted. Agree with investigation for consideration of notion.”

- Lead Cabinet Member Councillor Colin Hayfield.
- Other Cabinet Members Councillor Alan Cockburn
Councillor Chris Saint – “There are some potentially beneficial options for the tourism sector.”
- Chief Executive
- Legal Ian Marriott - agreed
- Finance Paul Walsh, Financial Services Manager - approved
- Other Chief Officers
- District Councils
- Health Authority
- Police
- Other Bodies/Individuals

FINAL DECISION NO

SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee
- To Council
- To Cabinet
- To an O & S Committee
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Agenda No

Cabinet - 02 February 2006

Potential Tourist Information Facility in Market Hall Museum, Warwick

Report of the Director, Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards

Recommendation

That Members:

- 1 Authorise officers to pursue an investigation of the feasibility and to undertake negotiations about the integration of Warwick Tourist Information facilities into the museum building at Market Hall, Market Place, Warwick and
- 2 Receive a report in due course prior to the agreement of a final position.

1 Background

The future of the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) in Warwick, currently administered by Warwick Town Council and sited in the Town Council offices, is under consideration. There are a number of issues with the current premises including disability access.

Warwick District Council and Warwick Town Council have jointly approached the County Council to explore the possibility of some tourist information facilities being provided from the County Council's museum building at Market Hall in the Market Square. Preliminary discussions between officers suggest that the proposal is worth investigating more fully.

The proposal is therefore brought before members for discussion at this stage.

2 Market Hall Museum

The Museums currently run by the County Museum Service comprise:

- The Market Hall, Warwick – headquarters of the service, with staff offices, displays on the archaeology and history, natural history and geology of Warwickshire, and a temporary exhibition gallery used for varying subjects including the work of local artists

- St John's House, Warwick – displays on social history including dolls and toys and costume and textile; base for Heritage Education service. First floor houses Museum of the Royal Warwickshire Regiment, who are leaseholders.
- Roman Alcester – a partnership between WCC, Stratford-on-Avon District Council and the Alcester Heritage Trust.

The need to refurbish and renew the Market Hall Museum was an outcome of the Museum Service Strategy BVR. Fundamental issues are that the building faces 'the wrong way' given the current pattern of pedestrian circulation in the town centre, that neither the main entrance nor the upper floors are fully accessible. As a result there has been little investment in the main displays which are now outdated and badly in need of major renewal. The BVR also identified the possibility of joint use of the Market Hall with another party as a possible component of a larger property strategy. The Market Hall, which is an iconic building, has the potential to play a far greater role in creating a vibrant and welcoming Market Square and Town Centre than is currently the case. To achieve this potential, it is recognised that external funding – perhaps from the Heritage Lottery Fund – would be needed.

The Market Hall is a historic building of considerable interest and significance to the history of Warwick. It is a Listed Building, Grade II*, and any works affecting it would therefore require Listed Building Consent.

3 Outline Proposals

If the TIC were incorporated into the Market Hall, it would need to be on the ground floor, and to be fully accessible. The proposal would therefore involve, as a minimum:

- New/replacement entrance to the building, with level access, facing either Swan Street or the Market Place (the alternative merits to be investigated in the next stage of work).
- Re-modelling of most if not all of interior of ground floor of museum.
- Integrated TIC/Museum Reception/Enquiry Desk/Shop

4 Potential Benefits

The main benefits are considered to be:

- Opportunity to instigate improvements to Market Hall.
- Increased footfall into the museum generated by TIC.
- Tourists from Warwick Castle drawn into Town Centre.
- Some efficiencies from sharing of premises/services between public bodies.

5 Potential Risks

Installation of the TIC would mean loss of museum display space – which is already under severe pressure, increased by the closure of the Doll Museum. Investigation is needed into whether the impact of this can be reduced by creating public access to the rest of the building.

There is also a risk that the staff of the combined reception facility would focus more on TIC business than on museum information and security – the management arrangements would need to address this.

Potentially, piecemeal redevelopment of the Market Hall might compromise future more substantial renewal and refurbishment. This would need to be mitigated by careful planning and ‘future proofing’.

6 Next Steps

If investigation of the proposal is to go forward to the next stage, there is much detailed work to be done. There are several possible models for layout, and for the means by which the TIC and the joint facilities could be run, and the relative merits of these will be considered. Issues so far identified for investigation include:

- Detailed layout and space planning
- Listed Building issues
- Practical consequences of moving the entrance to a different side (land ownership, market and other rights, etc).
- Staffing, operational and management issues.
- Cost sharing

Depending on the outcome of these investigations, if it were our recommendation to proceed, then a report would be brought to Cabinet seeking approval, incorporating the result of consultation with Warwick Area Committee and Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

7 Conclusion

Officers consider that the potential benefits of the proposal merit detailed investigation and feasibility work. The results of this would be brought back to members in due course.

NOEL HUNTER
Director, Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards

Shire Hall
Warwick

05 January 2006