

Decision Record – De-accessioning items from the Social History, Natural Science and Archaeology collections at Warwickshire Museum Service

Cabinet Portfolio Holder taking decision: *name and portfolio*

Councillor David Wright – Finance, Improvement and IT
Councillor Colin Hayfield – Customers, Access and Property

Date of Decision: (NOT BEFORE 24th August 2012)

29th August 2012

Decision taken

I, as Portfolio Holder for Finance, Improvement and IT, and I, as Portfolio Holder for Customers, Access and Property, approve the disposal of the items listed in Appendices A, B and C in accordance with the Museum’s Acquisition and Disposal policy, the Museum Association Code of Ethics and the associated Disposal Toolkit.

Reasons for Decisions

1.0 Key issues

- 1.1 Warwickshire Museum Service safeguards, manages and develops collections which illustrate Warwickshire’s rich and diverse past. The collections were originally assembled by the Warwickshire Natural History and Archaeological Society which founded the Museum in 1836. The Society collected from all over the world, aiming to show the world to Warwickshire people. The Museum Service has been run by Warwickshire County Council since 1932 and its collections cover Natural History, Social History, Geology and Archaeology. Today, the service focuses on Warwickshire people and places and their stories.
- 1.2 “Museums meet their responsibility to future generations by ensuring that collections are well managed and sustainable. There is a strong presumption in favour of the retention of items within the public domain. Sometimes transfer within the public domain, or another form of disposal, can improve access to, or the use, care or context of, items or collections. Responsible, curatorially-motivated disposal takes place as part of a museum’s long-term collections policy, in order to increase public benefit derived from museum collections”.¹

¹ Code of Ethics for Museums, Museums Association

1.3 Curatorial staff at Warwickshire Museum Service undertake collections audits which seek to improve the care and management of the museum's collections. These audits periodically identify objects for potential disposal in accordance with the Museum Association's Code of Ethics and Warwickshire Museum Service's Acquisition and Disposal Policy.

1.4 Items may be identified for potential disposal for the following reasons:

- Duplication –the service holds other similar examples?
- Provenance –the object has a weak or no Warwickshire connection or relevance?
- Condition – the object is in poor condition or (see Appendix B) is too hazardous to have pragmatic display or interpretation potential.
- Misidentification – the objects have been the subject of specialist scrutiny and are no longer deemed to be artefacts.

1.5 The term "disposal" means *"to select the most suitable method of disposal to reach the desired outcome"* (taken from the Museums Association Disposal Toolkit for Museums). These methods are:

- free gift or transfer to another accredited museum
- exchange of items between museums
- free gift or transfer to another institution / organisation within the public domain
- return to donor
- sale of item to an accredited museum (it is recommended that this is only considered in exceptional circumstances)
- transfer outside the public domain
- sale outside the public domain (this course of action must only be undertaken if it has been established that no museum or public organisation is able to take the item. it is not recommended as the first course of action)
- recycling of item
- destruction of item

2.0 Proposal

2.1 Appendices A, B and C comprise lists of objects from the Archaeology, Natural Science and Social History collections which have been identified as priorities for potential disposal. This report seeks approval for curatorial staff to take appropriate steps in accordance with the Museum Association Code of Ethics (Section 6) to dispose of these objects.

**Background Information/ factors considered in arriving at these decisions -
(set out below or attach officer report):**

Background Financial and Legal Implications
Report Author: Caroline Sampson Head of Service: Mark Ryder Strategic Director: Monica Fogarty Portfolio Holder: Councillor Colin Hayfield Councillor David Wright

Checklist

Urgent matter: yes/no*

No

Confidential or Exempt (state category of exempt information)

N/a

Is the decision contrary to the budget and policy framework

No

List of Reports considered [please attach or forward a copy]

N/a

List of Background Papers [please include directorate contact names and numbers for access to background papers]

Museum Association Code of Ethics
<http://www.museumsassociation.org/ethics/code-of-ethics>
Warwickshire Museum Service Acquisition and Disposal policy

Any members and officers consulted or informed and any comments given.

For Comment:

Monica Fogarty – Strategic Director, Communities
David Carter – Strategic Director, Resources
Wendy Fabbro – Strategic Director, People
Jim Graham – Chief Executive
John Betts, Simon Smith and Virginia Rennie – Finance
Greta Needham – Head of Law and Governance
Tejay De Krester – Equality
Graeme Smith – Chief Fire Officer
Councillor Colin Hayfield – Decision Maker
Councillor David Wright – Decision Maker
Jane Pollard and Sarah Duxbury – Legal

For information:

Councillors John Appleton, June Tandy, Jerry Roodhouse