

AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET

Name of Committee Warwick Area Committee

Date of Committee 21 March 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, is being investigated. Members are asked to support further investigation and negotiation and to comment on the issues raised.

For further information please contact:

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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

Potential Tourist Information Facility in Market Hall Museum, Warwick: Report to Cabinet, 2 February 2006

CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:- Details to be specified

- Other Committees
- Local Member(s) Councillor R Randev – “I support the recommendations.”
- Councillor K Browne – “I fully support this proposal.”
- Other Elected Members Councillor S Tooth, Councillor R Dodd,
- Councillor Mrs M Haywood – “Support further investigation re: viability pre any decision.”

Councillor A Cockburn,

Councillor C Saint – “This facility would place the TIC in a more pedestrian friendly location. Account will need to be taken of the current reviews into destination management in both South Warwickshire, the County and the sub-region”.

- Cabinet Member Councillor C Hayfield
- Chief Executive
- Legal Ian Marriott – comments incorporated
- 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 Date to be confirmed
- To an O & S Committee Adult & Community Services Overview & Scrutiny Committee – date to be confirmed
- To an Area Committee
- Further Consultation

Agenda No

Warwick Area Committee - 21 March 2006

Potential Tourist Information Facility in Market Hall Museum, Warwick

Report of the Director of Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards

Recommendation

That members:

- support further investigation of feasibility and negotiations about the integration of Warwick Tourist Information facilities into the museum building at Market Hall, Market Place Warwick and
- note (and if appropriate add to) the list of issues raised.

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 (Appendix 1). Preliminary discussions between officers suggest that the proposal is worth investigating more fully.

Cabinet on 2nd February resolved to 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 to receive a report in due course prior to the agreement of a final position.

The District Council has funded work to bid to Advantage West Midlands to obtain capital funding to improve the TIC and other information and reception facilities for visitors to the Town. The bid, entitled "Warwick Renaissance" has been accepted through two stages now and the final bid will be submitted by March 2006. This bid

would provide the main source of funding for relocating the TIC within the museum but also enable a wider tourist experience of Warwick, encouraging more people to move from the Castle into the town, and linking with Hill Close Gardens Visitor Centre, scheduled to open later this year.

The Town Council on 8th February 2006 resolved to agree in principle to support a scheme which might see the Tourist Information Centre (TIC) relocated to the Museum subject to:

- i. An agreed business plan which would provide for the continuation of a quality TIC, operating for the benefit of the tourist economy and the towns' residents.
- ii. Full consultation with staff, with the intention that any staff transfer fully protect their existing conditions of service, and
- iii. The costs of the scheme being met by funding from the Advantage West Midlands Bid.

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

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 explored. 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

Prior to the agreement of a final position, a further report will be taken to Cabinet. Consultation with the Adult and Community Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will also be undertaken.

7. Conclusion

Members are invited to comment on the proposal and to identify any further issues which ought to be taken into consideration.

NOEL HUNTER
Director, Libraries, Heritage & Trading Standards
Shire Hall
Warwick

28 February 2006

Appendix 1

