

Cabinet

30 January 2020

Warwickshire Museum Service Collection Development Policy

Recommendation

That Cabinet:

- 1) Considers, comments and endorses the direction for Warwickshire Museum Service (WMS) and,
- 2) approves the draft WMS Collection Development Policy.

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 This report seeks Cabinet's feedback and endorsement of a revised WMS Collection Development Policy (attached as Appendix A).

2.0 Executive Summary

2.1 Background

- 2.1.1 WMS both helps with the understanding of the past and with the shaping of the future for Warwickshire. The main ways it achieves this is the collecting, safeguarding and making accessible artefacts and associated information on the county of Warwickshire for the benefit of the wider community, present and future.
- 2.1.2 The main point of access to the WMS collection for the public is the Market Hall Museum, Warwick. This reopened in February 2017 after an extensive refurbishment. Since reopening visitor numbers have dramatically increased. Between April 2018 and March 2019, 72,303 people visited the Market Hall Museum.
- 2.1.3 WMS also has a presence on the ground floor of St. John's House, Warwick. Whilst this site is no longer fully open to the public it does host organised visits, predominantly by school groups. Between April 2018 and March 2019 3,364 children attended as part of a school group.
- 2.1.4 Organised activities also take place at the Market Hall Museum. Between April 2018 and March 2019 433 children attended sleepovers and 123 events took place for children and families.

- 2.1.5 In 2004, the Roman Alcester Heritage Museum was opened in Alcester at Globe House, with a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is managed by the Alcester Heritage Trust, under a bipartite agreement with Warwickshire County Council (WCC). Objects from WMS collections (mainly Roman but including prehistoric and early medieval in date) are displayed there on renewable loan agreements.
- 2.1.6 The WMS collections contain over 800,000 items. Those items not on display are stored at the WMS store at Montague Road, Warwick. The Collection Development Policy contains an overview of the collections held by WMS.
- 2.1.7 The Heritage & Culture Strategy 2020 – 2025 which was recently endorsed by Cabinet presents an excellent opportunity for WMS. The Strategy sets out the following vision:

By 2025 Warwickshire will have a thriving, innovative and creative heritage and culture sector working collaboratively to develop and deliver a rich, high quality, accessible heritage and cultural offer for all who live, work and visit Warwickshire

- 2.1.8 The vision is underpinned by the following objectives:

- ***To create the conditions to enable a thriving, innovative and creative heritage and culture sector***
- ***To empower the heritage and culture sector to support the county council in transforming the way services are designed and delivered for the benefit of all who live, work and visit Warwickshire***

2.2 Why do we need a Museum Collection Development Policy?

- 2.2.1 The draft Collection Development Policy governs what WMS does and does not collect. It ensures that sound curatorial reasons are established before consideration is given to any acquisition to the collection, or the disposal of any items in the museum's collection.

- 2.2.2 The Policy will provide a framework for managing the collections to enable WMS to:

- Maintain its high standards in regard to collecting, documenting and exhibiting and interpreting material.

- Build on its good performance in providing a safe and welcoming community facility, in engaging younger people with collections and in developing partnerships with other heritage / museum organisations
- Improve on its performance in engaging adults with collections, in outreach and other services outside the museum and in advocating for itself and its collections

2.3 Analysis of Warwickshire Museum Service

2.3.1 WMS seeks to ensure that it is collecting, safeguarding and making accessible artefacts and associated information on the county of Warwickshire. There are both strengths and weaknesses in the current practice of WMS in regard to achieving this.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<p>Good proactive approach to collecting material in accordance with its Collection Development Policy</p> <p>Documenting of newly acquired material and the recording of the available details</p> <p>Exhibition and interpretation of collections in both permanent and temporary displays</p>	<p>Presentation of WMS website</p> <p>Opportunities for interaction with WMS beyond visiting the Market Hall Museum are limited</p> <p>Opportunities for collection engagement for adult audiences whilst present are limited</p> <p>WMS needs to improve its ability to advocate for itself and its collections</p>
Opportunities	Threats
<p>Professional, dedicated and experienced staff with a good knowledge of museum practice</p> <p>Move to the Resources Directorate in 2018 has presented the opportunity to strengthen and renew existing relationships particularly with colleagues in the library service</p> <p>New Heritage and Culture Strategy for the County Council presents an opportunity for WMS to work with a wider range and number of organisations and partners across</p>	<p>The reduction in staff at WMS means that staff are now covering a wider range of subject specialisms than they have traditionally.</p> <p>The two curators in addition to being responsible for a larger number of collections are also responsible for leading on exhibitions and access.</p> <p>WMS is likely to run out of storage in the next few years - the quantity of material discovered in Warwickshire during the construction of HS2 and in turn how it will be distributed is unknown</p>

Warwickshire	
Redesigning of the website will allow WMS to increase its profile and make it easier for the public to know how to access the collections	If WMS were to run out of storage space it would be unable to fulfil one of its core functions: collecting and safeguarding artefacts and associated information

2.4 Refocussing of WMS

2.4.1 The draft WMS Collection Development Policy will provide a framework to ensure that collecting is focussed, and the management of the collection allows WMS to refocus its activities to ensure it better responds to and represents the diverse communities which make up Warwickshire whilst continuing to be an accredited service.

As is	To be
Exhibitions are created in a considered fashion, taking in to account major events (e.g. Coventry being the City of Culture) but there is no long-term programming.	Exhibitions will be created in accordance with a five-year exhibition programme which will be start in April 2020. This programme will consider important local, national and international events and anniversaries and will be reflective of staff capacity
The creation of exhibitions is led by WMS staff, sometimes with the support of colleagues in other areas of HCW. Occasionally, as part of specific projects, members of local communities participate in the creation of exhibitions.	HCW is undertaking a piece of work to create an Audience Development Framework. The Framework will allow WMS to start to work more closely with communities to allow co-creation of exhibitions. In time this co-creation will be an embedded part of the practice of WMS in creating exhibitions.
The reopening of the Market Hall Museum in February 2017 has been a great success in regard to numbers accessing the collections	The Heritage & Culture Strategy and the Audience Development Framework, in conjunction with the revised Collection Development

but the diversity of those accessing the museum collections is limited.	Policy, will increase the diversity of those who interact with WMS collections
The majority of those accessing the collections do so at the Market Hall Museum	<p>The Heritage & Culture Strategy will ensure that the WMS will collaborate with other organisations, especially heritage organisations, across Warwickshire.</p> <p>These partnerships will increase the number of venues where people can access WMS collections. This will increase the number of locations outside of Warwick where people can view the collections and provide points of access across Warwickshire.</p>

3.0 Conclusions

- 3.1 The draft Museum Collection Development Policy sets out a clear rationale for how WMS manages its collections strengthening WMS ability to fulfil its role and discharge its responsibilities. In doing so, WMS will support residents of Warwickshire in enriching their lives and contributing to strong and resilient communities. In addition, to positively affecting people's lives WMS will be better placed to increase the contribution it makes to the local economy.
- 3.2 The draft Policy supports the organisation in achieving its goal of being the best it can be by collecting and making available artefacts which will provide an understanding of the past and inform the shaping of the future for Warwickshire.
- 3.3 This draft Policy also aligns with the Heritage & Cultural Strategy 2020 - 2025 as it recognises the need to engage with a wider range of stakeholders to ensure relevance to contemporary Warwickshire.

4.0 Financial Implications

- 4.1 There are no financial implications for the draft Policy itself, however, any long-term storage solutions identified may have a capital cost and potentially a revenue cost. This will need to be scoped and quantified so the priority for

investment can be considered alongside the other options for the use of the Council's available resources.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 There are no environmental implications for the draft Policy itself, however, any long-term storage solutions identified will meet key sustainability requirements and best practice in this area.

Appendix

Draft Museum Service Collection Development Policy

Background papers

None

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This report was circulated to the following members prior to publication.

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