
Subject:	DEVELOPMENT OF DOVER MUSEUM INCLUDING REVIEW OF COLLECTION AND STORAGE REQUIREMENTS
Meeting and Date:	Cabinet – 1 October 2018
Report of:	Roger Walton, Director of Environment and Corporate Assets
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor M J Holloway, Portfolio Holder for Community Services
Decision Type:	Non-Key Decision
Classification:	Unrestricted

Purpose of the report: To advise Cabinet of evolving plans being developed to re-image and enhance Dover Museum in support of the regeneration of the town centre, and to seek Cabinet agreement for a project to undertake an audit of the current Dover Museum collection and bring forward proposals to resolve the long-standing issues of museum storage.

Recommendation:

- (1) To confirm support for the proposal to re-image and enhance Dover Museum, recognising the potential benefits this could bring to the regeneration of the town centre;
- (2) To approve a project to undertake an audit of the current Dover Museum collection and develop proposals to resolve the long term issues of Museum storage.

1. Summary

- 1.1 Dover Museum was founded more than 150 years ago and moved to the current location in Market Square in 1991 having been previously been located in the basement area of the Maison Dieu.
- 1.2 It has now become a must-see tourist attraction in Dover, containing the award-winning Dover Bronze Age Boat Gallery and a wonderfully diverse collection highlighting the fascinating history of the coastal town of Dover.
- 1.3 The museum therefore has a key role to play in supporting the regeneration of the Town Centre and this report seeks Cabinet agreement in principle to the development of an ambitious project, which builds on the existing success and aims to create an enhanced cultural offer fit for the 21st century.
- 1.4 These proposals once delivered will also develop proposals for solutions to the issues associated with the storage of the museum collection which has been a periodic problem throughout its history. Much of the collection is at risk of damage or loss by currently being housed in inadequate conditions split between unsuitable warehouse accommodation in Deal and various parts of the Maison Dieu, Dover.

- 1.5 As the first step in moving the project forward this report seeks Cabinet agreement and funding to support the proposed audit of the current Dover Museum collection, which will bring renewed clarity as to the educational objectives of the museum, to undertake an audit of the current collection and bring forward proposals to resolve the long standing issues of museum storage.

2. Introduction and Background

History

- 2.1 It is worth noting as background that the history of Dover Museum extends to almost 200 years having been founded by the Dover Museum and Philosophical Institute in 1836. The Institute aimed to promote “literary and scientific knowledge by means of a museum, library and reading room, conversazioni and classes.”
- 2.2 The Institute originally met in the Old Guildhall, which had just recently been vacated by the Council following their move to the newly purchased Maison Dieu. Initially, the museum was only open to members, but in December 1837 it was reported in the Dover Telegraph that “the museum would be open every Monday to all classes gratuitously”. This arrangement began on Boxing Day and 1500 people attended in 5 days. They did no damage and the hall was so crowded that not all could sign the visitors book.
- 2.3 The first donations to the museum were mostly natural history specimens. The Mayor of Dover, E. P. Thompson, was the first donor to be entered in the new accession book. The Museum moved from strength to strength in the subsequent years and soon it became increasingly obvious new premises were needed. In 1849 with the support of the Dover Town Council the museum re-opened above the newly constructed market in the Market Square.
- 2.4 The Museum and its collection suffered significant damage during the Second World War and, following the end of the war, the museum temporarily re-established itself in Ladywell. Unfortunately, even before the doors opened the new premises were found to be inadequate.
- 2.5 Since the 1960s the museum has become more focused on the history of Dover and the surrounding area. The museum’s collection is now guided by a collecting policy identifying the areas in which the museum is interested. This has helped shape the museum’s collections into the strong local history and archaeology collection that it is today.
- 2.6 In 1989 the museum moved back to the Market Square, into a new building behind the old façade of the Market Hall. In 1999, it was expanded to include the award-winning Dover Bronze Age Boat Gallery. The museum is now a must-see tourist attraction in Dover, containing this famed archaeology gallery of national interest and a wonderfully diverse collection highlighting the fascinating history of the coastal town of Dover.

Storage and Access to the Collection

- 2.7 The history of the Museum shows that as the collection has grown over the years, there have been several attempts to review and refine its content and storage arrangements. It is now clear that a further in depth review is required.
- 2.8 Central to any discussions regarding storage is the collecting policy, which identifies the areas in which the museum is interested. Whilst this was most recently reviewed

in 2016 and Accreditation does not require this to be done again until 2020, it is recognised that it would be prudent to review this as part of this exercise as this will enable a proper assessment of the museum's storage needs both now and over the coming years.

- 2.9 Currently much of the museum collection is housed in various locations within the Maison Dieu, Dover with the remainder within unsuitable warehouse accommodation in Deal. The current storage arrangements are at best inadequate and there is therefore a consequent risk of damage or loss. The total storage space currently utilised is 9,018 ft² (837.9m²) of which half is within the Maison Dieu. The annual running cost of the store in Deal is c£7.5k, but the costs of Maison Dieu are absorbed within the cost of running the building.
- 2.10 Equally, the Council's plans for the Maison Dieu, which have now received funding support from the Heritage Lottery Fund, will require the current stores within this building to be relocated elsewhere by mid 2020 and this time pressure is now one of the key drivers for this project.
- 2.11 In addition to these concerns, an opportunity has arisen, which it is hoped will allow more ambitious and far reaching proposals to be brought forward and allow the Council to build on the existing success of the museum and create an enhanced cultural offer for the town fit for the 21st century.

Development Proposals

- 2.12 Kent County Council (KCC) is currently preparing plans for the refurbishment of the Discovery Centre, which was acquired from this Council in 2001 upon the closure of the White Cliffs Experience. The museum and the Discovery Centre still share some services, which are common to both parts of the building and the property arrangements also see elements of the building leased to DDC and vice versa.
- 2.13 The Council has therefore been in regular contact with KCC over the past year or so as they have developed their plans for the building, which are now moving into the detailed design phase. This provides a timely opportunity for more ambitious plans to be considered, which would allow the reimaging and enhancement of the museum as part of the Dover Town regeneration project and supporting the improvement of Dover's tourism offer.
- 2.14 Informal agreement has been reached with KCC to extend the scope of their project and consider the potential for the development of the building as a cultural hub for the town with the proposals from a DDC perspective having three specific objectives:
1. To co-locate the KCC Local Studies Library and the Council's own archive of ephemera and local history into a single reference facility.
 2. To look at the potential for providing some space within the premises for storage of parts of the collection, especially the more valuable and delicate items, recognising that the museum has a vital role to play in educating and informing residents and visitors alike by facilitating access for researchers to view and study items within the collection, and provide working space for the museum's growing team of volunteers.
 3. To seek to create additional gallery space within the development plans to fulfil longer term ambitions to increase the space available to both display

those parts of the Museum collection in store and to enable the Museum to host temporary visiting exhibitions on a regular basis.

- 2.15 These objectives are being pursued in partnership with KCC through a joint KCC/DDC Project Board and have been included within the draft consultancy brief for which an appointment will be made shortly.
- 2.16 This project, once complete, would enable the full visitor potential of the Discovery Centre, to be harnessed, providing a more efficient allocation of space within the building and enabling the joint provision of services as outlined above.
- 2.17 Once clear viable plans for the creation of additional gallery space have been drawn up these can be used to support applications for external funding or support from benefactors to allow the delivery of the proposed additional gallery space.

Next Steps

- 2.18 For the project to move forward it has been recognised that in the first instance additional staff resources will be needed to lead the proposed audit and review of the collection and bring forward detailed plans to both refine storage requirements and develop long term solutions to effectively store and thus safeguard the collections.
- 2.19 It is therefore proposed to make appointments to three temporary posts to support a two-year programme involving a Museum Collections Manager plus 2 Research Assistant Apprenticeships at a budgeted cost of £160k.
 - Collections Manager: £45k pa (including on-costs);
 - Apprenticeship x 2: £15k each pa over 2 years; and
 - £10k allowance for sundry staff costs (ICT, equipment, training, etc.)
- 2.20 Whilst this is clearly a significant financial investment, it will enable future decisions on the provision of new facilities for museum storage to have the assurance that:
 - a) The current museum collection has been fully appraised and rationalised.
 - b) The museum collection policy has been reviewed and provides clear guidance as to the future development of the collection and consequent storage demands.
 - c) Any provision made for future storage is appropriate to the needs of the collection and does not provide unnecessary excess capacity.
- 2.21 It is also recognised that as the project progresses, and especially if the proposals to establish a research facility are realised, that this would inevitably lead to a requirement to consider extending this additional investment in staff resources beyond two years, with consequent impact on future revenue budgets.
- 2.22 Therefore as the project develops, further reports will be made to Cabinet as the work on the review of the Collection Policy, the identification of detailed options for future storage and the partnership work with KCC progress, given that each of these may have revenue implications. The budgetary impact of any such demands on the Council's Medium Term Financial Plan will need to be assessed at that time as future proposals are brought forward for decision.

3. Identification and Evaluation of Options

3.1 There are two Options available to Cabinet:

Option 1: To support the proposed project and allocate funds from the Urgent Works Reserve to finance the project.

Option 2: To take no further action.

3.2 Option 1 is the preferred option as this will enable long term solutions to be brought forward to effectively store and thus safeguard the Museum collection, recognising that the vacation of the current storage facilities in Maison Dieu is needed to enable that project to be progressed,.

4. Resource Implications

4.1 It is proposed to finance this project as follows:

£30k from the corporate apprenticeship budget;
£130k from the Urgent Works Reserve.

4.2 In order to offset this additional reserve commitment Cabinet will be invited to recommend to Council as part of the budget process that the £116k project currently included in the MTFP for temporary display cases for the Zeebrugge 100th anniversary commemorations and the £21k project for leisure centre contingency be deleted as these projects are no longer required to be funded at this time.

4.3 The MTFP currently includes a £500k provision for capital expenditure on museum storage provision, subject to Cabinet approval of a project appraisal, which may be utilised to support any proposals developed as part of this project.

4.4 Consideration will also need to be given in due course with regards to future ongoing revenue cost implications relating to the future storage arrangement. This includes property costs associated with the provision of additional storage facilities and any resource requirement to enable access to the collection for research/study.

5. Corporate Implications

5.1 Comment from the Section 151 Officer: Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment to add. (HL)

5.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted in the preparation of this report and has no further comments to make. (HR)

5.3 Comment from the Equalities Officer: This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications, however in discharging their responsibilities members are reminded to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15>. (KM)

6. Appendices

6.1 None.

7. Background Papers

7.1 None.

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