

Ref:

Called in

Yes/No

**THE THANET DISTRICT COUNCIL**

**RECORD OF DECISION OF CABINET**

Cabinet Member

Councillor Ian Gregory

Relevant Portfolio:

Cabinet Member for Financial Services and Estates

Date of Decision:

18 October 2018

Subject:

Asset Management - The Museums

Key Decision

No

In Forward Plan

Yes

Brief summary of matter:

Museums support society, their collections provide educational and wellbeing benefits set in an environment of culture and heritage. The museum environment should be one where the climate facilitates good custodianship of the collections, be welcoming and safe for people, one which stimulates learning and the experience leaves the visitors feeling positive about the visit, encouraging new and repeat footfall to the area. Done well, museums stimulate economic development and regeneration.

The Council owns and operates two museums (and associated heritage properties). A review of the condition of these museums has identified a significant backlog of repairs and, with a climate of reduced public funding, consideration has to be given to finding alternative ways to continue to support museum provision in the future.

The Cabinet report provides information about the current situation and asks Cabinet to authorise officers to look for alternative options that will ensure a sustainable museum presence in Margate and Broadstairs.

Decision made:

Members authorised officers to progress the Cabinet decision as follows:-

- (1) Dickens House, Broadstairs - to market the opportunity as a going concern (i.e. the premises, collections and staff) through appropriate channels for transfer to a voluntary or community body and
- (2) Margate Museum, Margate - to market the opportunity following the rules imposed by the Asset of Community Value regime (Localism Act 2011) to transfer to a voluntary or community body and
- (3) Tudor House, Margate - market opportunities through appropriate channels to transfer the premises to a use that demonstrates credible investment will be achievable in a reasonable timeframe and the use will continue to support the heritage of the area and use of the asset by members of the public and
- (4) Margate Town Hall, Margate – market opportunities for the property through appropriate channels to transfer to a use that demonstrates credible investment but

with consideration given to preserving the Margate Charter Trustees presence. The existing leasehold interest on the ground floor will not be affected by the transfer.

- (5) In respect of above to report back to Cabinet with the outcome of the marketing exercise and a recommendation on the way forward for each of the above properties.

Reasons for decision:

In consideration of the substantial capital sums they require to invest in the premises which is not available in council funds, and that the museums require specialist expertise to ensure they attract visitors and offer the best experience which the council do not have and in recognition that there are more funding opportunities available for qualifying community groups than councils.

Alternatives considered and why rejected:

To close the two museums and remove the artefacts loaning them to museums already devolved from the Council. This is not recommended as a first choice for the Council as it would not support the visitor experience of enjoying the collections within the area they were designed to promote.

For the council to consider offering a joint venture with an established museum, but as mentioned earlier in this report there is no expertise available in the council to do this, nor ongoing financial support to bring to the partnership.

Details of any conflict of interest declared by any executive Member who has been consulted and of any dispensation granted by the Standards Committee:

None

Author of Officer report:

Edwina Crowley, Head of Asset Management

Background papers

Asset Management - The Museums report  
Dickens House  
OTHall museum (1)  
Tudor House Margate (1)  
O T Hall (1)

Statement if decision is an urgent one and therefore not subject to call-in:

None

Last date for call in:

26 October 2018