

## Creating a Resilient Future for Thanet's Museums

Cabinet	<b>08 September 2016</b>
Report Author	<b>Susan van Schalkwyk, Project Support Officer</b>
Portfolio Holder	<b>Cllr. Lin Fairbrass, Deputy Leader &amp; Cabinet Member for Community Services</b>
Status	<b>For Decision</b>
Classification:	<b>Unrestricted</b>
Key Decision	<b>Yes</b>
Reasons for Key	<b>Significant effect on communities</b>
Ward:	<b>Margate Central; Central Harbour; Viking</b>

### **Executive Summary:**

- The Council owns five different sites operating as museums, all of which are in need of significant investment to meet their full potential.
- Officers have recently been reviewing the options for three of these museums, but the Council and community could benefit from a strategic review for all of the museums.
- A new funding programme has become available from the Heritage Lottery fund that could fund this strategic review, at no cost to the Council.
- There are some actions that the council should take now to improve sustainability

### **Recommendation:**

That the Council:

1. Completes an initial, and any necessary subsequent applications, for up to £250,000 funding from Heritage Lottery Fund through the Resilient Heritage programme in order to undertake a full strategic review of museums, including feasibility studies, business planning, legal advice, and governance reviews;
2. Pursues the potential of establishing a new museum on the Tudor House site incorporating the collections from both current sites of the Margate Museum, and subject to a fully costed business case agrees to the establishment of the same;
3. Agrees to establish the Dickens House Museum as a formal Trust and register this with the Charity Commission;
4. Agrees to seek the transfer of the Joyce Smith bequest into the new Trust, and seek agreement with the Dickens House Fellowship to utilise the funds in line with the bequest to support the full costs of operating the museum, backlog maintenance, and any necessary feasibility work;
5. Takes this opportunity to formally acknowledge and thank volunteers across Thanet whose hard work and dedication are continuing to support the museums.

<b>CORPORATE IMPLICATIONS</b>									
<b>Financial and Value for Money</b>	<p>The total project would cost £245k which would require 5% match funding. This will be funded from the museums and/or community services budget. Therefore the total funding bid will be for £232,750. All costs are revenue, with no capital expenses at this stage.</p>								
<b>Legal</b>	<p>The project plan would include taking full legal advice on ownership of collections and buildings, as well as governance reviews. Extensive legal advice has previously been taken around the governance of Dickens House Museum (see related Background Paper 'Dickens House Museum').</p> <p>Legal implications will occur from any funding agreement if the HLF application is successful.</p> <p>Any decision made by the Local Authority must have due regard to the Public Sector Equality duty under s149 of the Equality Act 2010.</p>								
<b>Corporate</b>	<p>There are risks to the viability of a strategic review if it does not include an appropriate level of community engagement. The attendant risks for this project are low as the funding can cover costs associated with engagement, and the key stakeholders, the staff and volunteers of the museums, will be engaged prior to making a funding bid.</p> <p>The funders will want assurance that the results of the strategic review are acted upon. One of the key aims of the strategic review will be to reduce or remove the Council's ongoing liabilities and expenses relating to the museums, so it will be in the Council's best interest to act upon the review. The review will include business planning including future fundraising, and feasibility studies will ensure risks to the Council are understood, with recommendations made on how they can be mitigated.</p>								
<b>Equality Act 2010 &amp; Public Sector Equality Duty</b>	<p>Members are reminded of the requirement, under the Public Sector Equality Duty (section 149 of the Equality Act 2010) to have due regard to the aims of the Duty at the time the decision is taken. The aims of the Duty are: (i) eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act, (ii) advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it, and (iii) foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</p> <p>Protected characteristics: age, gender, disability, race, sexual orientation, gender reassignment, religion or belief and pregnancy &amp; maternity. Only aim (i) of the Duty applies to Marriage &amp; civil partnership.</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="432 1541 1406 1787"> <tr> <td colspan="2">Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,</td> <td></td> </tr> <tr> <td>Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it</td> <td>x</td> </tr> <tr> <td>Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.</td> <td>x</td> </tr> </table> <p>At present none of the museum sites are compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act. This project would include feasibility studies for capital works and visitor experience evaluations that will identify the specific needs of the sites to meet these requirements and work towards allowing all people to participate in visiting the museums.</p> <p>Additionally the volunteers who staff the various sites are predominately of</p>	Please indicate which aim is relevant to the report.		Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Act,		Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it	x	Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not share it.	x
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	retirement age. This project would undertake a full Customer Impact Assessment to evaluate the impact of any changes to staffing, governance, location, or offer of the museums. Business planning undertaken during this project will seek to ensure that there is opportunity for people with a wide range of protected characteristics to be involved.
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<b>CORPORATE PRIORITIES (tick those relevant)✓</b>	
A clean and welcoming Environment	
Promoting inward investment and job creation	x
Supporting neighbourhoods	x

<b>CORPORATE VALUES (tick those relevant)✓</b>	
Delivering value for money	x
Supporting the Workforce	x
Promoting open communications	x

## **1.0 Introduction and Background**

- 1.1 The Council owns five different sites that are operated as museums by volunteer groups. These are: Margate Museum in the Old Town Hall and the Tudor House in Margate; Dickens House Museum and Crampton Tower Museum in Broadstairs; and the Maritime Museum in the Clock House, Ramsgate. In the past 6 months officers have been undertaking two separate reviews of three of the museums (one of Margate Museum and the Tudor House, and one of Dickens House Museum) and reported updates and recommendations regularly to CMT.
- 1.2 Both reviews have identified significant investment needs in capital works and governance, and it is believed that Crampton Tower Museum and the Maritime Museum share similar needs. All of the sites involved are listed buildings that lack DDA compliance and require significant capital investment; all are operated by or depend heavily on [mainly] unconstituted volunteer groups; none are accredited museums; and all could play a greater role in the regeneration, tourism, community development, and economic development for Thanet. It should be noted, that over recent years, it has only been with the commitment and dedication of many hard working volunteers that the museums have been able to operate at all.
- 1.3 A new funding programme has been made available by the Heritage Lottery Fund that is appropriate for funding strategic reviews. The Resilient Heritage programme is available for projects up to £250k and will cover revenue costs relating to staffing for project management, consultancy for feasibility studies, community engagement, legal advice, and other direct project costs. The total project would cost £245k which would require match funding of 5%. This will be funded from the museums and Community Services budget. There are no capital costs at this time, though the strategic review will include a full assessment of future capital costs as well as a fundraising strategy to cover them.

## **2.0 The Current Situation**

### **2.1 *The Five Museums***

Currently five different sites owned by the Council are operated as museums. The collections displayed are largely owned by the Council. These museums are as follows.

#### **2.1.1 *Margate Museum***

Located in the Old Town Hall, Margate Museum is dedicated to the history of Margate. It is operated by a group of volunteers, the Margate Museums Trust, though currently this group is unconstituted and is not registered with the Charity Commission. This group is the successor to the Friends of Margate Museum, set up

in 2011 under the active instruction of TDC Officers. The museum attracts approximately 4,000 visitors per year and is free to enter, though donations are encouraged and go to the Trust. The Council covers overheads and maintenance of the building; in 2015/16 the budget including recharges was £33,577.95, and the 5-year maintenance plan prepared in 2014 estimates costs at £651,555. The building is Grade II listed, and not DDA compliant.

#### 2.1.2 *Tudor House*

Located on King Street just outside of Margate Old Town, the Tudor House is primarily an attraction as a heritage building. It was purchased by Margate Borough Council in 1936 for use as a museum. It hosts education sessions and public events. It has been operated by the Margate Museums Trust since 2012. The site attracts approximately 4,000 visitors per year and is free to enter, though donations are encouraged and go to the Trust rather than TDC. The Council covers overheads and maintenance of the building; in 2015/16 the budget including recharges was £6,729.15, and the 5-year maintenance plan prepared in 2014 estimates costs at £164,450. Within the curtilage of the property is a derelict structure comprised of the walls of an 18<sup>th</sup> century malt house and a covered yard. The building is Grade II\* listed, and not DDA compliant.

#### 2.1.3 *Dickens House Museum*

Located on Victoria Parade overlooking Viking Bay in Broadstairs, the Dickens House Museum was the home of Mary Pearson Strong, the inspiration for the character of Betsey Trotwood in the novel *David Copperfield*. The last occupant of the house, Miss Tattam, bequeathed the site to Broadstairs and St. Peter's Urban District Council in 1951, with TDC as successor. It is staffed by a part-time caretaker and an honorary curator whom lives on the first floor of the property, both of whom are directly employed by the Council. The Museum was created by the Tattam Bequest, and legal advice taken in 2014 identifies the Council as the charitable trustee of the building and its collection. There is additionally a small group of volunteers. The museum attracts approximately 8,000 visitors per year and charges admission, with income going to TDC. The 2015/16 costs were £52,501.67 (including Recharges) and income £31,443.24 for a total cost to the Council of £21,058.43, while the 5-year maintenance plan prepared in 2014 estimates costs at £153,710. Joyce Smith bequeathed a sum of £50k to be administered jointly by the Museum and the Dickens Fellowship Broadstairs, and the Council is currently negotiating with the Dickens House Fellowship to utilise the funds towards support the full costs of operating the museum, backlog maintenance, and any necessary feasibility work. The site also includes Nuckells Garden adjacent to the property along Victoria Parade. The building is Grade II\* listed, and not DDA compliant.

#### 2.1.4 *Crampton Tower Museum*

Located adjacent to Broadstairs railway station, the museum focuses on engineer Thomas Crampton who made significant contributions to locomotives and telegraphy. It opened in 1978 and is operated by the Crampton Tower Railway Museum Society, a voluntary organisation that is registered with the Charity Commission. It is currently on a 25-year lease that runs until 2028 for which they pay the Council £13,500 per annum. The museum attracts approximately 5,000 visitors per year and charges admission, which goes to the Society. The Society is responsible for all maintenance and works. The building is Grade II listed.

#### 2.1.5 *Ramsgate Maritime Museum*

Located in the Clock House, Ramsgate Royal Harbour, the Maritime Museum is dedicated to the maritime history of Ramsgate. It is operated by The Steam Museum Trust on a 25-year lease from 1 April 2012 which includes a schedule of repairs that the Trust must begin by 31 March 2017. It was previously operated by East Kent

Maritime Trust from 1985 to 2008. They pay a peppercorn rent. The Ramsgate Society has expressed interest in taking on the lease to this site to manage the Museum and to undertake their other activities, and have been in talks with the Steam Museum Trust about assigning the lease to them. Required capital works are estimated at £150-£175k. The site also includes Smeaton Dry Dock, where the historic steamship Cervia (owned by the Steam Trust) is located. It is unknown how many visitors per year the museum attracts, and unclear whether the museum is regularly open at all. The Clock House and Smeaton Dry Dock are Grade II\* listed.

## **2.2 Aims of Strategic Review**

A strategic review will include:

- Ensuring the Council's museums and heritage collections have a clear vision and are sustainably managed in the future by undertaking feasibility studies and business planning for their operations
- Exploring fully the range of transfer and governance models available to maximise the viability of the museums and to reduce TDC expenditure and liability in the future.
- Identifying the ways that museums can best contribute to the Council's strategic planning in areas such as regeneration, community development, tourism, and economic development by engaging with the community and stakeholders.
- Establishing and realistically funding a forward plan for the museums that takes into account full revenue and capital costs and timescales of delivering the recommendations of the strategic review.

## **2.3 Elements of Strategic Review**

### **2.3.1 Governance**

The present governance situation puts TDC and its relevant assets at risk. Only one operator (at Crampton Tower) is in a robust state, and volunteers and activities at three of the sites (Margate Museum, Tudor House, and Dickens House) are covered by TDC insurance, with all liabilities lying with TDC. Ramsgate Maritime Museum is not currently regularly open, and is actively engaged in a transfer of operator.

Governance review is required for the current and potential operators, with a view towards assigning operations of the museums to robust organisations. It may also be advisable to explore encouraging the different organisations to work together, which could be by uniting the groups in a formal or informal arrangement.

### **2.3.2 Capital Works**

While no capital works will take place as part of the strategic review, it is acknowledged that both remedial maintenance and updates to making each of the museum sites fit for purpose are needed, and the full costs need to be identified. Only Dickens House Museum has had recent surveys done, and a portion of the Joyce Smith Bequest may be available to act as match funding in seeking external funding for the required works. Structural engineering and conservation surveys need to be undertaken at each of the other sites, accounting for the needs of the collections, the suitability of the museums as viable visitor attractions, their listed building status, and DDA compliance.

The Margate Museum Trust and TDC are proposing to work together to undertake a feasibility study for the collection to move from the Town Hall to the Tudor house site, and to revitalise this site, the Tudor House and the associated listed barns to provide

a new Margate museum. This could be a tremendous new museum blending heritage buildings and collections with a modern exhibition space. This would not only add to the wider cultural offer of the town, but also further open the route to the Caves [also undergoing planned redevelopment], and Cliftonville. Significant investment would be required to regenerate the derelict building and the Tudor house. A feasibility study, business case and fundraising development plan are needed to enable the scheme to proceed.

The Ramsgate Maritime Museum site and collection could undergo a similar review; the suitability of the Clock House for the collection has never been assessed. There are already community groups working on ideas to further sustain Ramsgate's maritime heritage.

Crampton Tower Museum is fixed in its location. The site as a whole requires further strategic planning and maintenance, and may require a capital works fundraising plan.

### 2.3.3 Legal, Equalities and Access

There is a need for a full legal review of all sites and collections apart from the Dickens House Museum, which has undergone this process recently. The Ramsgate Maritime Museum has complex lease agreements and transfers between TDC, East Kent Maritime Trust, and the Steam Museum Trust will require a robust review to establish appropriate governance. A legal review may be necessarily intertwined with the governance review process. Legal counsel's advice regarding Dickens House Museum is that a charitable trust should be formed and registered with the Charity Commission. This advice leaves open a variety of governance models that need to be more thoroughly explored once the Trust has been formally established.

Customer Impact Assessments are needed for each site. At present none of the museum sites are compliant with the Disabilities Discrimination Act. This project would include feasibility studies for capital works and visitor experience evaluations that will identify the specific needs of the sites to meet these requirements and work towards allowing all people to participate in visiting the museums. Additional access surveys are needed for sites such as the Tudor House, which is located on a busy road with no parking or nearby pedestrian crossing.

Additionally the volunteers who staff the various sites are predominately of retirement age. This project would undertake a full Customer Impact Assessment to evaluate the impact of any changes to staffing, governance, location, or offer of the museums. Business planning undertaken during this project will seek to ensure that there is opportunity for people with a wide range of protected characteristics to be involved.

### 2.3.4 Strategies and Stakeholders

Museums can support and inform regeneration, economic development, community development, tourism and more. The Council has not previously had a museums strategy, and there is the opportunity to ensure that the museums not only meet their full potential as visitor attractions in their own right, but actively contribute to other strategic areas.

This can be effected through community and stakeholder engagement. Important stakeholders who can contribute to ensuring a strategic vision for museums in Thanet that meets local needs include: the relevant museum volunteers; TDC officers and members; sector bodies such as the Arts Council for England and Historic England; area museums and heritage attractions such as Turner Contemporary and Quex House & Powell-Cotton Museum; and a wide range of community groups.

## **2.4 Expected Costs of Strategic Review**

2.4.1 Staffing – This project would require dedicated officer time that there is not currently capacity for. A full time post over 2 years, including on costs and expenses, would cost approximately £85k, which could be covered through grant funding. This post would be responsible for overseeing the project, but the time of other Officers and CMT will be required. While the Council is not eligible to apply for full cost recovery through the HLF, the project can be planned to limit the time dedicated by staff to that already allocated through agreed strategies and planning.

2.4.2 Consultancy Costs – There is a need for specialist assessments including:

- Access and Equalities
- Structural Engineering
- Legal Advice
- Feasibility and Business Planning

The estimated costs are £130k across the museums, which could be covered through grant funding.

2.4.3 Community Engagement – Extensive engagement with the current museum volunteers, potentially including training and development support, will be necessary. Likewise engagement with the wide variety of relevant stakeholders will be key to its success. Communications, engagement, and volunteer support are estimated to cost £30k, which could be covered through grant funding.

The exact programme expenditure may need to be vired within the overall budget allocation.

## **3.0 Options**

3.1 The options are to apply for external funding to undertake a strategic review of the Council's museums, or not apply for this funding.

3.2 There are many advantages to applying for this funding and undertaking a strategic review. They include the opportunities to:

- Develop a clear vision for the museums and to ensure that the Council's museum collections are best protected in the future, and that museums contribute to strategies and plans in the areas of regeneration, tourism, community development, and economic development.
- Undertake a full governance review of each of the museum organisations to reduce ongoing liabilities.
- Cover the Council's costs for undertaking a strategic review by funding the project management post and a wide range of consultancy fees including feasibility studies, structural engineering surveys, legal advice, and training for staff and volunteers.

The only disadvantage is the requirement of 5% match funding. However this can be sourced from within the museums and Community Services budget.

3.3 Not applying for external funding to undertake a strategic review of the Council's museums is equivalent to doing nothing. There are no internal resources to undertake this review, and the Council would continue to be open to the liabilities of its current situation.

#### 4.0 Next Steps

- 4.1 If Cabinet accepts the recommendations a funding application will be submitted to the HLF in the autumn.

Contact Officer:	Susan van Schalkwyk, Project Support Officer, x7428
Reporting to:	Rob Kenyon, Director of Community Services

#### Annex List

None	N/A
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#### Background Papers

Title	Details of where to access copy
None	N/A

#### Corporate Consultation

<b>Finance</b>	Clive Bowen, External Finance Officer
<b>Legal</b>	Dawn Cole, Senior Legal Officer