

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 8 January 2018

**Report Title:** Hastings Museum strategic development

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Assistant Director for Regeneration and Culture

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### **Purpose of Report**

To summarise recent strategic and project development at Hastings Museum and request support for the next stage of the process.

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### **Recommendation(s)**

- 1. That the council support the proposal to apply for Heritage Lottery Fund Resilience funding in order to develop a capital bid.**
- 2. That the budget is amended to take into account the income and expenditure involved in the event of a successful bid.**

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### **Reasons for Recommendations**

To support the development and long-term sustainability of Hastings Museum and Art Gallery so that it can contribute fully to the culture-led regeneration of the town and quality of life of residents.

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## Introduction

Hastings Museum and Art Gallery have been undertaking transformational work through its Arts Council England funded Resilience Programme 'Finding Our Place' (FOP).

This paper will recap on the findings of the stage 1 project, outline the findings of the stage 2 project and make a recommendation on the next steps in the process.

## Finding Our Place 1: A New Vision for Hastings Museum and Art Gallery

1. Hastings Museum and Art Gallery was awarded £33,000 in 2015-16 from Arts Council England's Museum Resilience Fund to undertake a review of the service.
2. The review's aims were to fully define the museum's position within its changing and challenging operating context and to identify relevant risks, opportunities and resources which will enable the museum service to grow and develop its services.
3. It also sought to establish the core purpose of Hastings Museum and Art Gallery's role within the wider cultural offer of Hastings and to formulate a clear and confident long term vision to achieve this and to equip the workforce with the skills and confidence to meet future challenges.

## Report Findings

4. The museum is considered to be in a good position within the local authority, and as a result there is little need to fundamentally change the governance of the museum.
5. This positioning also means the museum is well placed to respond to Hastings' regeneration strategies and in particular, the Cultural and Heritage strategies.
6. The museum is an important cultural asset that in telling the story of the history of Hastings, holding collections of broader cultural significance and providing varied exhibition and activity programmes, complements the wider cultural offer in Hastings.
7. The findings of the review highlight the range of issues that the museum currently faces and that will need to be addressed for the museum to move forward and transform. The five areas that emerge as key issues are:
  - A wide range of problems with the internal and external spaces that combine to create a poor physical profile and an inadequate visitor experience
  - The lack of coherence in the interpretation of displays and the failure to provide different levels of engagement for visitors of all ages and abilities.
  - The staffing levels lack the capacity to develop and deliver a transformative programme.

- Income is largely derived from secondary spending in the shop, and by charging for additional services such as weddings. There is very limited scope to increase income without further physical development of the museum.
  - The museum has a low profile and visibility within Hastings, and is poorly advertised at key locations in the town. It does not fully utilise on-line media and engage in opportunities for joint marketing.
8. A five-point plan was developed to address these issues (Appendix A). A number of the short-term actions have been completed using existing resources. These include:
- The appointment of a dedicated Learning Officer.
  - The redisplay of the Local History Galleries to include material from the closed Old Town Hall Museum.
  - The redisplay of the Dinosaur and Ceramics galleries.
  - Improved community consultation and data collection.
  - Improved internal signage
  - An application to ACE Museum Resilience fund for Finding Our Place 2: Delivering the Vision

## **Finding Our Place 2: Delivering the Vision**

9. The Museum was again successful in the application to the ACE Museum Resilience Fund and was awarded £85,000 for a project to be delivered in the period 1 October 2016 to 31 March 2018.
10. Finding our Place 2 focusses on four areas for improvement identified in the stage 1 review:
- Improving visibility of the Museum through marketing and promotion
  - Audience development and engagement
  - Collections review to ensure effective working practices
  - Business and project development expertise
11. The marketing intern has been refreshing the museum's social media profile and auditing marketing materials and outputs. As she has now left the role the remainder of that budget will be used to commission a consultant to write a marketing plan for the museum. The plan will build on the work of the marketing intern and the visitor data collection work undertaken as part of the Sustainability Improvement Plan. The consultant will write the plan and oversee the implementation of practical marketing initiatives.
12. Training has been given to museum staff on data collection and audience development to support a deeper understanding of the audience and increase the visitor base. A visitor questionnaire was trialled at the 125th birthday event. An external facilitator will undertake a consultation with visitors about access to

collections in store; this will take place in November. The development of the visitor data collection survey has highlighted for the museum that collecting data about their audiences is a priority. It has also underlined the capacity issues within the current staffing, because it has been difficult for staff to find time within their roles to undertake the surveys and input the data.

13. The Collections Review pilot has been completed and a total of 635 First World War items have been catalogued, photographed and reviewed for significance. This pilot area was selected to complement Hastings Remembers, an HLF funded project commemorating WW1. The social history collections have been identified as the next area to be reviewed. The museum staff are working with a consultant to deliver a public engagement event, aimed at consulting with the museum visitors about the collections' accessibility. The staff are also working with a range of experts to produce significance statements for the collection. The documentation review intern is continuing to work on the collection review.
14. The museum curator's backfill is being used to update and review the museum's policies, procedures and plans for accreditation. The consultant has been working closely with museum staff with a particular focus on reviewing and rewriting the Forward Plan. As part of this review the project manager delivered a vision workshop to museum staff with support from the consultant. The output was an agreed vision, set of values and strategic objectives.
15. A consultant has been appointed to undertake the consultation with the Museum Association (friends of the museum) to ascertain how they perceive their future involvement with the museum.
16. A draft Business Development Plan has now been produced. This will be closely linked to the Museum's Forward Plan which is also in draft form, and will cover the period 2018 -2021 (parts 1-3 in Appendix B).

## Next Steps

17. Underlying both FOP 1 and 2 is an ambitious vision for the museum, articulated in the draft Forward Plan as;  
  
"Hastings Museum and Art Gallery is a museum that is creative, excellent, relevant, visible and viable for the people of Hastings."  
  
This cannot be achieved solely through efficiencies and short term actions, and both reports highlight the need for more significant development in the medium term.
18. Key to this will be the next stage of capital development for the museum site delivered through a major bid to the Heritage Lottery Fund. This is all the more relevant in light of the White Rock Masterplan which highlights the role of the museum as a cultural gateway. Developing a major capital bid is outside the capacity of the existing staff and additional support will be needed.
19. The Forward Plan also identifies the need for more support to deliver ambitions around income generation and the other strategic objectives (see Appendix B).

20. The proposal is to apply to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Resilient Heritage scheme for support for the next stage of the journey. The bid will be for between £80,000 and £90,000. The scheme does not require cash match for bids of this size. Support in kind is needed, but to no specific percentage.
21. A key aim of the stage 3 project will be to develop and submit the HLF capital bid. The stage 3 project will also aim investigate new approaches to income generation and engagement with existing and potential audiences.
22. Applications to the Heritage Lottery Fund's Resilient Heritage scheme can be made at any time. It is expected that the application will follow the completion of the current Finding our Place project.
23. It is too early in the process to complete a detailed project plan for the HLF Resilience bid as it will be informed by the final FOP2 report. The anticipated timeframe for the HLF Resilience project is to begin the bid process in March or April with a view to starting the project in September 2018. The delivery will then be for 18-24 months.

### Recommendation

24. That the council supports the proposal to apply for HLF Resilience funding.

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### Wards Affected

Castle

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### Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	x
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	
Risk Management	
Environmental Issues	
Economic/Financial Implications	
Human Rights Act	
Organisational Consequences	
Local People's Views	x
Anti-Poverty	

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### Additional Information

Appendix A – Finding Our Place 1 5 Point Plan  
 Appendix B – Finding Our Place 2 Draft Forward Plan

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### Officer to Contact

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