

CROMWELL MUSEUM FUTURE GOVERNANCE

To: Highways and Community Infrastructure

Meeting Date: 15 July 2014

From: Executive Director Economy, Transport and Environment

Electoral division(s): Huntingdon

Forward Plan ref: N/a *Key decision:* No

Purpose: To inform the Committee about the report of an external review of options for the future of the Cromwell Museum, following the proposed withdrawal of Council funding to run the museum from April 2016, and to ask the Committee to make decisions about the way forward.

Recommendation: The Committee is asked to agree to:

a) the creation of an independent charitable Trust to take over the running of the museum

b) leasing the museum building to the new Trust for 25 years on an internal repairing lease at less than best consideration (subject to approval by General Purposes Committee)

c) leasing museum storage and office facilities in Huntingdon Library and Archives to the new Trust for 5 years at less than best consideration (subject to approval by General Purposes Committee)

d) the Council bearing the cost of any staff redundancies arising as a result of the transfer of undertakings

e) using the Cromwell Museum Art Fund to help fund the establishment of the new Trust

f) the Council retaining ownership of its assets within the museum collections

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1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 The Cromwell Museum in Huntingdon is a small museum housed in the old Grade II* listed Grammar School building (where Cromwell attended school), dedicated to telling the story of Oliver Cromwell and his links with the town. It is the only museum service directly provided by the Council, and is a discretionary service.
- 1.2 One of the Council's savings proposals for the 2015/16 financial year was the closure of the Cromwell Museum, in order to save £30k per annum. Following a public petition, an amendment to defer this saving until the 2016/17 financial year was agreed at the full Council meeting in February. This was to allow the Cromwell Museum Management Committee to work with consultants, officers, other public bodies, grant-making bodies and the local community to set up a vehicle to help secure the continuing existence and development of the Museum.
- 1.3 Julie Cole Consultancy was commissioned (using funding from the Arts Council's Renaissance Programme) to review the options for the future of the museum and to comment on their viability. The report of this work was published on the Council's web site in April, together with the response of the Friends of the Cromwell Museum.
- 1.4 The consultant explored a number of options including:
 - Create an independent charity to run the museum and remain in the Old Grammar School building
 - Create an independent charity to run the museum and move the museum to another location in Huntingdon, e.g. the Town Hall
 - Close the Cromwell Museum and move it to the new Civil War Museum in Newark, where two rooms have been earmarked for it should a local solution not prove viable
- 1.5 In addition, the consultant explored an option to work with East Cambridgeshire District Council and the Cromwell House in Ely, but this proved not viable.
- 1.6 There is strong local support for keeping the museum in Huntingdon, and the Cromwell Museum Management Committee (CMMC) voted to support option 1 and the consultants' recommendations.

2. CONSULTANT'S RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 *Create an independent charitable organization (Trust) and remain in the Old Grammar School building*
A charitable trust could benefit from benefactors, gift aid and grant funding sources not available to the County Council, as well as volunteer support. There has been strong local support for retaining the museum in its current building, which has a unique connection with Cromwell. The Old Grammar School building is very small, cannot easily be extended and lacks any kitchen or toilet facilities, therefore there are few other uses for the building and disposal is likely to be difficult.

- 2.2 *Take out a 25 year internal repairing lease with the County Council at a peppercorn or agreed rent, with a break clause after 5 years, to enable the Trust to move the museum elsewhere if running costs prove prohibitive.*
It is highly unlikely that a new Trust will be able to raise sufficient funds to pay a full market rent and, as noted above, there are unlikely to be alternative uses for the building.
- 2.3 *Objects and documents not in display in the museum should remain stored at Huntingdonshire Library and Archives (HLA) at a peppercorn rent. (The response to the report by the Friends of the Museum added that curatorial office space should also be provided at HLA.)*
Storage of artefacts and documents not displayed in the museum (and office space for the curator) will remain a challenge for the Trust. Officers recommend that in the short term, whilst the Trust establishes itself (e.g. in the first 5 years) current storage in HLA is provided at a peppercorn rent, but thereafter is chargeable at a full market rent or transferred elsewhere.
- 2.4 *Propose not to transfer any of the existing museum staff to the trust, the redundancy costs to be borne by the Council. Trust to employ a 'junior level' curator for a maximum of 2 days per week.*
HR and Legal advice has confirmed that all museum staff will need to be transferred to the new body under TUPE regulations. However, it would be possible for the Council to agree to pay the cost of any redundancies, which whilst not high (estimated £5k - £10k maximum) would be prohibitively high for the Trust to bear in its early stages. If the Trust does not intend to employ front line staff then some staff could be made redundant, however if the Trust intends to continue to employ a curator in a broadly similar role, redundancy may not apply. The Trust would need to seek its own legal and HR advice on this matter.
- 2.5 *County Council should support and handover to the new Trust with additional tapered funding of:*
○ 2015-16 £10k + value of rent
○ 2016-17 £6,666 + value of rent
○ 2017-18 £3,333 + value of rent
(The Friends of the Cromwell Museum also feels that the Art Fund should remain as a purchasing fund for the use of the new Trust, and that the County Council should fund the establishment of the Trust from other revenue funding.)
Expenditure will be required to establish the Trust, with the bulk of the work taking place in 2015/16. However, the Council cannot allocate additional revenue for this purpose without needing to find further savings from elsewhere. Therefore it is proposed that this support funding should be to the maximum value of the remaining Art Fund reserve (see below), tapered over three years, rather than agreeing additional revenue funding.
- 2.6 *Use the Cromwell Museum Art Fund (a reserve fund currently amounting to £15,800) to help fund the establishment of the Trust.*
Since this funding was set aside for the purposes of the museum over many years, it seems appropriate to use it to help secure the museum's future by supporting the development of the Trust. This fund is not included in the Council's savings proposals for the Museum.

3. ALIGNMENT WITH CORPORATE PRIORITIES

3.1 Developing the local economy for the benefit of all

The following bullet point sets out details of implications identified by officers:

- The Cromwell Museum is the main visitor attraction in Huntingdon and draws visitors from across the country and around the world, thereby making a positive impact on the local economy. By supporting a new Trust to continue running the museum, the Council will enable this positive impact to continue.

3.2 Helping people live healthy and independent lives

There are no significant implications for this priority.

3.3 Supporting and protecting vulnerable people

There are no significant implications for this priority.

4. SIGNIFICANT IMPLICATIONS

4.1 Resource Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- These proposals would realise the £30k saving on running the Cromwell Museum as set out in the Council's business plan
- The Council would retain its property asset and the option to dispose of it in future, but also the liability for external maintenance of the building.
- The Cromwell Museum Art Fund would be spent on establishing the new Trust, leaving no purchase fund for the new Trust.

4.2 Statutory, Risk and Legal Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Extensive Legal and HR advice will be required in setting up the new charitable organisation
- Re-accreditation of the museum by the Arts Council is due by October 2014. This needs to include approval of a forward plan for the museum. Without accreditation there is a high risk of the withdrawal of key parts of the museum collection by their owners, therefore further work on the details of future arrangements is urgent. Officers are working closely with the Arts Council to mitigate this risk.

4.3 Equality and Diversity Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

4.4 Engagement and Consultation Implications

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- Key stakeholders were consulted with as part of the Consultants' review, and are represented on the Cromwell Museum Management Committee (CMMC), which agreed to the Consultants' proposals.
- The consultants' report and the response of the Friends of the Cromwell Museum have been published on the Council's web site

4.5 Localism and Local Member Involvement

The following bullet points set out details of significant implications identified by officers:

- The establishment of a charitable Trust to run the museum will harness the skills and enthusiasm of local people to retain a popular visitor attraction which otherwise would be lost to the town.
- The CMMC includes local County and District Member representatives

4.6 Public Health Implications

There are no significant implications within this category.

Source Documents	Location
Cromwell Museum: Devolution of Governance Review JM Cole Consultancy Ltd, April 2014 Response from the Friends of the Cromwell Museum	http://www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/info/2/0011/archives_archaeology_and_museums/24/cromwell_museum