

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Cabinet	Date:	9 March 2016
Subject:	Museums Service Collection Development Policy 2016-2021		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
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Appendices:	1. Collection Development Policy 2016-2021		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The report replaces the Museums Service's Collection Development Policy 2010-2015. Museums are required to follow Collection Development Policy templates produced by Art Council England (ACE). The first template was produced in 2010, updated in 2011 and then a new template produced in 2014 with additional sections to replace all previous versions. The current draft of the Museums Service Collections Development Policy uses the ACE 2014 template as it must do if it is to retain its Accreditation status.
- 1.2 The template 'has been provided to support museums to produce a robust and effective policy, relevant to their collections and statement of purpose. The template policy includes standard clauses that all museums should include. Any changes to the template clauses must not reduce the requirement. Many template clauses relate to the legal responsibilities of museums as directed through Acts of Parliament, or International Conventions to which the UK is signatory. Legal advice has been sought in the development of the standard clauses within the template' (quoted from ACE Accreditation guidelines).
- 1.3 The Policy defines very clearly how, why and what the museums collect and it is used as a tool for managing the collections to ensure that everything the City Council owns in its museums can be justified. It also shapes what the museum collection will be like in the future, what can be acquired and what can be disposed of. It is a fundamental requirement for Museum Accreditation and hence for grant applications.

2.0 Recommendations

- 2.1 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that the policy, set out in Appendix 1, be adopted.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

- 3.1 In the past, some Museums had a 'no-refusal' policy for donated items. This led to the acquisition of large collections that had little relevance and depended upon the whims and enthusiasms of individual curators. Collection Development Policies were introduced twenty years ago to bring collections into focus: to strengthen the good and to eliminate the bad and/or the irrelevant. Moreover, an effective Collection Development Policy prevents adjacent Museums collecting from the same geographical areas.
- 3.2 A good Collection Development Policy is, therefore, essential to the proper management of the Council's collections. A Collection Development Policy sets out what Gloucester Museums collect and, by implication, what they do not collect. It enables staff to accept items as suitable to collections or to reject them as being unsuitable. It is a powerful tool when dealing with public donations and enables officers to refuse items without giving offence. It identifies areas where collections are incomplete. It helps to ensure that collections are focused on the core purpose of the service which is to tell the 2000 year story of Gloucester to all communities and visitors.
- 3.3 The current emphasis of the Collection Development Policy is responsible acquisition and the proper management of collections. That means that even if an item should fall within the scope of the Collection Development Policy, its size or the potential difficulties in conserving the item could prevent its acceptance by the Museums' Service.
- 3.4 In practice, in the current phase of the Council's collections, the emphasis is upon rationalisation and refocusing through careful management. The collections consist of some two hundred thousand items and not all of them are relevant or sufficiently provenanced to be of use. Some require special care that the Council does not have the resources to provide.
- 3.6 Rationalisation of the collections is a process which identifies which objects in the collection should be kept and which should be disposed of. Disposal of museum objects is done following the procedure set out by the Museum Association and Arts Council England to ensure that it is done fairly and ethically. Museums that do not follow MA and ACE guidelines are at risk of losing their Accreditation status which will subsequently prohibit them from applying for funding.

4.0 Asset Based Community Development Considerations

- 4.1 The Service has volunteers who work behind the scenes supporting David Rice, the City Museum curator, on various projects, for example inputting collection information into the museum object database, researching items in the collection for display and exhibition, and talking to visitors in the galleries about the displays. We have work experience placements most weeks through the school year who help Sarah Orton, the Folk Museum curator, with activities, events and school sessions.
- 4.2 As stated in the Policy, there are two levels of accessioning, the highest level is to accession (i.e. take legal ownership of) an object into the main museum collection, which will afford it the highest level of care. These objects have intrinsic historical value and many are fragile and rare; they are only used for display and their

environment must be strictly controlled. Objects in the main museum collection may be loaned to other museums and venues that undertake to appropriately care for them for example there are museum objects on display at the volunteer-run Jet Age Museum and St Mary de Crypt Church. Other objects, which do not meet the standards of the Collection Development Policy, can be accessioned into the handling, or education collection. These can be used in activities, events and school sessions in the museums, taken to outreach sessions, for example in schools or care homes. They are also used in community events around the City, for example in 2016 they will be used in the Hucclecote Show and the Retro festival. Objects in the handling collection can be loaned to schools and community groups.

5.0 Alternative Options Considered

5.1 The Policy has been written using a template provided by Arts Council England. Alternative options would be to not make any changes to the previous version or to not adopt a Collections Development Policy. If either of these options were agreed, Arts Council England would withdraw our Accreditation status.

6.0 Reasons for Recommendations

6.1 An agreed Collections Development Policy is a fundamental requirement of Museums' Accreditation. Without Accreditation the Museums Service would not be able to seek external funding or apply for loans of objects. If we lost Accreditation, it is likely that the Council would have to repay back part or all of any recent grants.

6.2 The Collections Development Policy will enable rationalisation of the collection to be carried out. It will also give staff the tools needed to refuse unsuitable gifts of objects and acquire objects of historical or cultural importance to the City and its communities that would otherwise be lost.

7.0 Future Work and Conclusions

7.1 The Collections Development Policy is a document that has been produced as a requirement of ACE's Museum Accreditation and will be used as a guide for ongoing rationalisation of the Collection.

7.2 A separate Action Plan will be produced which will outline rationalisation of the Collection to date, and specify how the work will be carried out, with timescales.

7.1 The policy will be reviewed in 2021

8.0 Financial Implications

8.1 If the Policy is approved, it will form part of the Museum Service's obligation to Accreditation, thereby allowing the service to apply for external funding. If the Policy is not approved, the Service would lose Accreditation and would not be able to apply for external funding, it would also be likely that the Council would have to repay part or all of any recent grants.

8.2 The policy contains statements relating to disposal of objects by gift or sale. These statements must be included in the policy before the Arts Council Accreditation

Board and Museum Association Ethics Committee will consider giving permission for the museum to dispose of objects by sale.

(Financial Services have been consulted)

9.0 Legal Implications

9.1 The policy provides guidelines to ensure that officers remain within current legislation concerning the trade in endangered species, the disturbance of human remains and the disposal or acquisition of material without the owner's consent. The guidelines are pre-prescribed by Arts Council England and have been appropriately applied within the policy as applicable to the museum's collections.

(One Legal have been consulted)

10.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

10.1 Failure to approve the Collection Development Policy will mean that Museums' Accreditation will not be granted and external funding cannot be sought.

11.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA):

11.1 It was considered whether the policy would affect how visitors are treated when they offer items to the museums for their collections and whether there would be impact on a particular group.

11.2 The PIA Screening Stage was completed and did not identify any potential or actual negative impact, therefore a full PIA was not required.

12.0 Other Corporate Implications

Community Safety

12.1 None.

Sustainability

12.2 None.

Staffing & Trade Union

12.3 None.

Background Documents: None