

Gloucester City Council

Meeting:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee	Date:	5 February 2024
	Cabinet		7 February 2024
Subject:	Museum Development Plan – Progress Update		
Report Of:	Cabinet Member for Culture and Leisure		
Wards Affected:	All		
Key Decision:	No	Budget/Policy Framework:	No
Contact Officer:	Lucy Chilton, Visitor Experience Service Manager		
	Email: lucy.chilton@gloucester.gov.uk		Tel: 39-6570
Appendices:	A. Museum Development Plan Progress Update		
	B. Museum Development Plan 2021-2026		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1.0 Purpose of Report

1.1 To provide an overview of progress made to date against the Museum Development Plan 2021-2026.

2.0 Recommendations

2.1 Overview and Scrutiny Committee is asked to consider the information contained in the report and make any recommendations to the Cabinet.

2.2 Cabinet is asked to **RESOLVE** that

(1) The report is accepted and progress against the objectives and actions noted.

3.0 Background and Key Issues

3.1 The Museum of Gloucester Development Plan (from here-on known as MDP) 2021 to 2026 was welcomed and adopted by Cabinet on 10 March 2021. The Museum is currently in year 3 of the 5-year plan.

3.2 The MDP sets out four key priorities, that set the overarching development plan and actions of the duration of the plan:

1. **Collections** – we will prioritise our collection – using our team and resources effectively we will understand our objects, their relevance to the city and will build appropriate facilities for their preservation and interpretation to effectively engage with the public.

2. **Public Programming** – We commit to curating an engaging and stimulating programme that we will use to educate and entertain our audiences. We believe learning through creativity is key and will embed this in our work, particularly using our collection to inspire the activity delivered within the Museum and beyond.
3. **Audiences** - We will become a fully open and accessible organisation with collaboration and co-creation at the heart of everything we do. We are nothing without people. We commit to developing a sense of shared ownership, to ensure our community is valued, listened to and able to influence the way we engage audiences with our collection and wider activity.
4. **Sustainability** - We will manage our budgets and fundraising efforts to ensure financial sustainability long-term, including identifying and implementing appropriate commercial opportunities.

3.4 Appendix A provides a more detailed update of some of the main highlights and progress made since the MDP was adopted in 2021. There are many different strands to the work of the Museum, all contributing to the priorities of the MDP.

3.5 Collections – the council holds responsibility for the city’s historic collections. The city’s collection contains over 750,000 objects. To maintain, care for, conserve, interpret and develop and make these collections publicly accessible, staff with expertise and professional knowledge of museum practice is important. Suitable methods of storage, documentation and display are also key to the effective management of the museum collections. The Museum of Gloucester is an accredited museum, meaning that it meets the professional standards set by the sector and the accreditation process is awarded approximately every 5 years by the Arts Council England. The Museum of Gloucester was granted its accreditation renewal in 2018 and renewals generally take place every 5 years through the submission of data returns to provide evidence of collections standards. To retain accreditation status, the Museum will be required to provide the next return during 2024/25.

3.6 A collections review is needed to fully understand the extent and contents of the Museum collection. A full review of all 750,000 objects will take time but the outcome of this will enable the service to make informed decisions, to be able to rationalize the number of objects held and to increase access to the Museum collection. In tandem, the decant of 25,000 objects are currently taking place at the former Folk Museum with a target date of 2027 to fully vacate the premises. Both areas of work, alongside other projects as listed in Appendix A will enable the Museum to understand its current and future storage needs. Once completed, this will be a significant moment for the Museum service as it can make better informed and more proactive decisions around the Collection and displays.

3.6 Public Programming/Audiences - Pre-pandemic, visitor numbers saw 40,000 people through the Museum doors per year. At the start of 2021/2022, numbers into the Museum were low. Further into 2021, numbers started to increase with a notable difference in August where the Ladybird Exhibition attracted visitors back into the Museum. *History, Her Story, Their Story, Our Story* continued to draw visitors in towards the end of the year with the first exhibition in a three-year partnership with Royal Photographic Society *International Photography Exhibition* (IPE162) taking place in early 2022. In total there were 19,658 visitors to the Museum in 2021/22.

- 3.7 In 2022/2023, the annual visitor figures total rose to 30,700. A touring exhibition Titanic Honour and Glory Exhibition arrived to inspire audiences during the peak season. A 1980s memorabilia exhibition took place late 2022 which also proved popular.
- 3.8 IPE163 continued into Spring 2023, with blockbuster *May The Toys Be With You* arriving to excite visitors over the summer period, followed by Buttons, Badges and Blazers in late 2023, the first exhibition since 2019 where the Museum collection was central to the exhibition. Forecasting to year-end, visitors number for 2023/2024 will be similar to those in 2022/2023 however, the noticeable difference for 2023/2024 is the increase in income generated through ticketed exhibitions. Income has also increased across the gift shop and café when comparing to previous financial years.
- 3.9 A programming consultant was appointed to review the entire Museum programme and create a Programming Framework to help place audiences and communities at the heart of the ethos of the Museum and its activities.
- 3.10 Sustainability – The Museum received £581,700 from external funders over the past 18 months. This funding has come from sources including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, Arts Council England and South West Museum Development. The City Council continues to subsidise the Museum, recognising the Museum as an important asset to Gloucester. Retaining Museum accreditation status and building relationships with funding partners is going to be essential in the continued development of the Museum.
- 3.11 The ongoing work of the Museum will ensure it meets the MDP 2026 goals (see page 2 of Appendix B).

4.0 Social Value Considerations

- 4.1 Museums play an important role in social value. *“Museums change lives. They educate, entertain, and inspire. They provide spaces for social interaction and reflection. And they make valuable contributions to their local communities. Some involve audiences in active participation; some play active roles in supporting social change. There’s no doubt that museums make a difference to the world.” – www.museumnext.com*
- 4.2 Cultural activity in the city can provide far-reaching benefits to citizens’ health, well-being, skills and help develop social cohesion and a sense of place. Cultural participation in activities such as visiting and engaging with Museum can bring disparate communities together to celebrate and collaborate.

5.0 Environmental Implications

- 5.1 Museum of Gloucester is implementing a programme of capital works that will result in reductions of energy consumption, through the Arts Council funded MEND project. This includes replacement of older heating systems, improved systems and equipment and replacement of lighting with LED throughout the museum. The impact of this investment will be realised from 2024 onwards.

6.0 Alternative Options Considered

6.1 N/A – update report.

7.0 Reasons for Recommendations

7.1 Update report.

8.0 Future Work and Conclusions

8.1 Retaining Museum Accreditation is critical. 2024/2025 will see the team updating several policies and evidence provided to Arts Council England. At this stage, a submission date is not known – Arts Council England provides 6 months' notice.

8.2 The former Folk Museum decant will continue to work towards the agreed decant deadline. This will enable the Civic Trust to maximise spaces within the building and will be a step closer in housing the Museum collection under one roof.

8.3 The Museum will continue to react to funding opportunities from external funding providers. Fundraising and grant applications will be important to enable future projects and any transformational plans. Further investment is needed in the Museum building and the team are already aware that a further round of MEND capital funding is due to be announced by Arts Council England in spring.

8.4 With the combination of the former Folk Museum decant, the collections review and rationalisation and the Archaeological project, the Museum will start to understand its future storage needs and can therefore start to outline its requirements to enable continuous collecting. Further discussions will take place with the county Library service to understand what opportunities are available with the space.

8.5 The Programming Framework project will be complete, and the Museum will start to adapt its programme to ensure that the Museum is meeting the needs of its audiences.

8.6 The Museum will be fully integrated into the new ticketing system in 2024 and will benefit from better audience insights and a better customer experience. A new retail system is due to be implemented late 2024.

9.0 Financial Implications

9.1 The report provides an update on the progress of the museum development plan. The report notes that external funding has been received and has been used to support the plan. There is no additional funding required from the Council as a result of this report.

(Finance have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

10.0 Legal Implications

10.1 There are no legal implications arising from the content of the report. Officers will work together with colleagues in procurement and One Legal for advice on the delivery of the objectives detailed in the report to ensure that they comply with the

provisions of the Councils Contract Rules and the procurement rules and regulations.

(One Legal have been consulted in the preparation of this report.)

11.0 Risk & Opportunity Management Implications

11.1 The opportunity to expand the footprint of the Museum across the Brunswick Road building that is shared with county council should be explored. There is potential for bringing the collections together into the same building from a set of disconnected stores across the city. Discussions with the county council should be conducted in order to understand whether this is an option for the future expansion of the museum at this site.

11.2 The risks to the city is the limitation of the storage availability across the various museum stores. This makes collections care and management more complicated and time-consuming. The ability to continue to collect relevant material to represent recent, current, and future material that is important in telling the story of Gloucester and its communities could be missed if lack of suitable storage becomes the driving factor in future museum collecting policy.

12.0 People Impact Assessment (PIA) and Safeguarding:

12.1 N/A

13.0 Community Safety Implications

13.1 None

14.0 Staffing & Trade Union Implications

14.1 None

Background Documents: See appendices.