

# WIRRAL COUNCIL

## SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY

### COMMITTEE

10<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2011

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>WIRRAL MUSEUM SERVICE – BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT PLAN</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>ALL</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DAVID GREEN</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR DAVID ELDERTON</b>
<b>KEY DECISION</b> ( <i>Defined in paragraph 13.3 of Article 13 'Decision Making' in the Council's Constitution.</i> )	NO

#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Members are asked to note the draft Wirral Museum Service Business Development Plan, 2011-2016, and agree for it to be distributed for consultation and comments before being referred to Cabinet.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATION/S

- 2.1 That Committee notes the draft of the Wirral Museum Service Business Development Plan 2011-2016 which will be circulated for comments to interested groups.
- 2.2 That a review of the staffing structure of the Museum Service be carried out as soon as possible.

#### 3.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

- 3.1 To enable a final Business and Development Plan for the Museum Service to be agreed following a period of public consultation.

#### 4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

- 4.1 At their meeting of 22 July 2010 Cabinet agreed to the improvement works to the Williamson Art Gallery and the Priory and requested (minute 83) *that the Director of Technical Services bring forward a report to a future Cabinet on the future operation of the Williamson Art Gallery and Museum, its management, use of the enhanced facilities, and engagement with public and user groups.*

- 4.2 A goal of the Corporate Plan is to provide high quality, value for money leisure and cultural facilities for Wirral residents and one of the projects is to develop the museum service and implement a marketing and promotions plan.
- 4.3 The previous development strategy and business plan for the Museums Service was produced in 2001. The original development strategy and staffing structure was created to reflect a spread of diverse sites which then included Birkenhead Priory & St Mary's Tower, Wirral Museum at Birkenhead Town Hall, Egerton Bridge, Shore Road Pumping Station, Wirral Transport Museum at Taylor Street, Birkenhead Tramway and the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum.
- 4.4 Since the production of the 2001 business plan the service has undergone various changes, and the combination of the effects of budget reductions, increased local competition and limited marketing opportunities have all impacted on the earlier business model. The subsequent Strategic Asset Review decision to dispose of the former Birkenhead Town Hall, Wirral Transport Museum and Birkenhead Tramway has delayed the production of a revised business plan but circumstances now create a strategic opportunity to reposition the Museum Service and consolidate its position.
- 4.5 Funding was initially provided to develop a Conservation Management Plan for Birkenhead Priory and St Mary's Tower and subsequent provision of £2m capital finance to address the long-standing serious structural problems affecting both sites and upgrade and refurbish the museums provision. This provides an opportunity to enhance collection management and display, improve the visitor experience and provide upgraded staff accommodation. By building on the existing strong foundation of the service, an enhanced provision will offer community engagement at a level that was previously unachievable.
- 4.6 The revised business plan assesses the impact of these various changes, and the changed recreational and educational expectations of museums in the 21st century. It also identifies management, development, financial and operational issues, and introduces mechanisms through which these changes will be managed.
- 4.7 The Museum Service has recently received national awards for 'A Textile Dynasty: Arthur H Lee & Sons, Birkenhead', which won the National Museums & Heritage Award in 2010 as the Industry's Favourite, and 'Above the Clouds: Mallory & Irvine and the Quest for Everest', which was Highly Commended in the Project on a Limited Budget section of the same National Awards. Both the Gallery and the Priory are fully accredited under the national scheme overseen by the Museums, Libraries and Archives Council. In 2010 both sites were also accredited under the VAQAS (Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme) standard.
- 4.8 The revised business plan contains the following aims and objectives;
  - To collect items of local, regional, national and international importance, to reflect Wirral's life and history, and to place that in a meaningful context.
  - To encourage and enable access to museums collections by all sections of society.

- To ensure the on-going development of the learning opportunities within the Museums Service.
- To continue to develop the sites and venues of the Museums Service through an on-going capital investment programme and to secure external investment.
- To attract visitors and tourists to the Borough through the promotion of the Museums Service.

4.9 These aims and objectives will be achieved by;

- increased levels of engagement over both sites
- becoming a key community hub embedded in its local neighbourhood,
- further developing a vibrant cultural resource enjoyed and valued by Wirral residents and visitors to the borough,
- reprofiling a widely recognised regional heritage asset and becoming a recognised key player in Wirral's tourism and day visitor offer.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

5.1 Not exploiting all funding opportunities.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

6.1 None at this stage.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

7.1 The Business and Development Plan is a draft and will be circulated for public consultation.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

8.1 The service is seeking to increase the involvement of volunteers the local community and all faith groups.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

9.1 Further to the proposed transfer of the former Birkenhead Town Hall, Wirral Transport Museum, Birkenhead Tramway and the lease on Shore Road Pumping Station a staffing re-structure has now become necessary. The original staff structure covering all seven sites is now inappropriate and, post-SAR transfers, staff resources require to be effectively deployed across the Williamson Art Gallery & Museum and Birkenhead Priory & St Mary's Tower to support the business development proposals.

9.2 There is a budget of £691,800 for the Museum Service for 2011/12 (including a heritage budget of £135,000).

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 There are none arising from this report.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 The Williamson Art Gallery & Museum is fully accessible to all members of the community, however access issues will be addressed at Birkenhead Priory & St Mary's Tower during the capital works programme.

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 The improvements to the Williamson Art Gallery will assist in carbon reductions.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 There are none arising from this report.

**REPORT AUTHOR:** Jim Lester  
Head of Cultural Services  
606 2082  
  
email: jimlester@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

i) Wirral Museum Service Business Development Plan 2011-2016.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet – Approval of Capital funding.	22 <sup>nd</sup> July 2010