
FINAL RECOMMENDATIONS REPORT - MUSEUMS WORKING PARTY

To: **Overview and Scrutiny Panel – 11th May 2010**

Main Portfolio Area: **Environmental Services**

By: **Overview and Scrutiny Museums Working Party**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Ward: **All**

Summary: **To set out the recommendations from the Museums Working Party to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel in relation to the future of museums in Thanet.**

For Decision

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Thanet is rich in Museum provision; as well as the museums in the 3 main towns there are a number of other local museums, some specialist, some small, and some of international reputation. However, most of our museums suffer from lack of visitors and therefore, income.
- 1.2 The Working Party, which comprises Cllrs Mrs Roberts and Scobie, agreed terms of reference that are set out below:
- To assess the future cultural role of Thanet museums in relation to education, tourism and preservation, by examining the best practice provided by museums elsewhere.
 - To consider the results of the work engaged to review the Council's collection of artefacts and examine proposals for a future collection policy.
 - To assess the opportunities arising from potential joint working between local museums and accessing resources and connections at a regional and national level.
 - The scope of the remit will exclude examining specific proposals for individual local museums.
- 1.3 The considerations of the Working Party on these terms of reference are set out in the next section.

2.0 Discussion

- 2.1 The considerations of the Museums Working Party in the context of its terms of reference are detailed below:

To assess the future cultural role of Thanet museums

- The role of local museums in the 21st century has to change. They have long been regarded as custodians of local life and local historical events, and a valuable source of information for local people. As well as this traditional role, museums now have to consider their role as 'tourist attractions'. With the opening of the Turner Centre, better road and rail connections, and more people considering holidays in the UK, our museums could make a vital contribution in presenting Thanet as a desirable area to visit. Better selection and presentation of artefacts,

'themed' exhibits, such as those seen at the Hastings Town Museum, better publicity, imaginative lighting and interactive displays, would all go towards this.

- 'Themed' museums, such as the Fishermen's Museum on Hastings sea front currently benefit from input from fishermen from Thanet as well as other local coastal areas. This idea could be pursued.
- Closer co-operation could also be developed with local schools and colleges regarding the requirements of coursework, and the benefits of 'hands on' visits to local museums.
- All museums have historically relied very heavily on the goodwill of volunteers, and currently, this is even more important.

To consider the results of the work to review the Council's collection of artefacts

- The Council's artefacts are mostly kept at the Margate Museum, a few are at the Maritime Museum. The Council's assets also include the 3 main town Museum buildings.
- In Margate Museum a start was made before 2009 to sort out and classify many objects and papers bequeathed by local people. There is some excellent historical material here, but also some items of lesser value. Display space is always a priority, and careful selection of themes and items for public presentation would be of great benefit. With this in mind, local museums might find it beneficial jointly to consider a 'future collections policy'.
- More use could also be made of the Web, and the concept of a 'Virtual Museum'.

To assess the opportunities arising from potential joint working

- Cooperation between the local museums in publicity, themed exhibitions, joint access to information concerning funding, etc would be of great mutual advantage. Specialist museums could build on links with other similar organisations locally and nationally. This of course takes man-hours and a certain level of specialist knowledge, and also some funding.
- The MLA's Accreditation Scheme is a worthwhile goal, allowing access to further funding and wider expertise.
- Thanet is a rich source of artefacts, many recovered during recent road building excavations. Currently, they are stored elsewhere, but a local display could be of interest to local people and visitors alike.
- As well as our history, local museums could explore opportunities to show current developments such as the use of hydroponics at Thanet Earth, and the advent of Wind Farms, and their technology.

To examine specific proposals for individual local museums

- A certain amount of work has been done to begin identifying problems specific to the 3 main Thanet museums, which may be appropriate to carry forward for the future.

3.0 Corporate Implications

3.1 Financial

- 3.1.1 None arising from this specific report.

3.2 Legal

3.2.1 None arising from this specific report.

3.3 Corporate

3.3.1 No significant new corporate implications arising from the report.

3.4 Equity and Equalities

3.4.1 None arising from the current report.

4.0 Recommendations

4.1 That the Overview and Scrutiny Panel agree to further work being undertaken by the Museums Working Party to develop more specific proposals in relation to the areas set out in the terms of reference.

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| Contact | Cllr Mrs Roberts on behalf of Museums Working Party |
| Reporting to: | Overview and Scrutiny Panel |
