

Decision Maker: Executive

For Pre-Decision Scrutiny by the Renewal and Recreation PDS Committee on:

Date: 29 January 2015

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: A NEW APPROACH FOR BROMLEY MUSEUM

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Chief Officer: Executive Director of Environment & Community Services

Ward: Orpington; Bromley Town Centre;

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The museum service has been identified as a budget cut for 2015/16 in the 14 January 2015 Executive Committee report, as part of the £60million savings that are required to be made within the next four years.
- 1.2 Bromley Council's recent 'Our Budget, Your Views' survey has shown the museum service to be the lowest priority for residents in the context of all other culture, leisure, arts and sport services the Council provides. Heritage and arts is considered to be a higher priority.
- 1.3 These survey findings corroborate with previous consultation results from 2013, which showed that residents consider the current museum service to be weak, but value the borough's heritage and want to have access to related learning and participation opportunities. It is therefore timely to consider a new approach to providing an improved quality heritage offer for residents, without an ongoing revenue requirement.

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the Renewal and Recreation Policy, Development and Scrutiny Committee note the content of this report and provide comments to the Renewal and Recreation Portfolio Holder.

- 2.2 That the Portfolio Holder agrees, and recommends to the Executive, the approach as set out in this report, namely that The Priory is declared surplus to operational requirements with effect from 1 April 2015 and authority is given to offer the property for sale on the open market.**
- 2.3 At its meeting on 11 February 2015, the Executive comments on the outcome of consultation; and that subject to any issues that may have arisen during consultation, endorses the proposal to close the museum service.**
- 2.4 The Executive approve the allocation of £395k from capital receipts for the relocation of exhibitions and to add the scheme to the capital programme.**

Corporate Policy

1. Policy Status: Existing Policy
 2. BBB Priority: Vibrant, Thriving Town Centres
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Financial

1. Cost of proposal: Estimated Cost £395k
 2. Ongoing costs: Recurring Cost Net revenue saving of £44k for 2016/17 and £74k for 2017/18 (provided the building is sold)
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Priory Museum
 4. Total current budget for this head: £152k
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget and capital receipts
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Staff

1. Number of staff (current and additional): 3FTEs of which 1FTE is vacant.
 2. If from existing staff resources, number of staff hours:
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Legal

1. Legal Requirement: Statutory Requirement : S 123 and S123(2A) of the Local Government Act 1972.
 2. Call-in: Applicable:
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Customer Impact

1. Estimated number of users/beneficiaries (current and projected): Currently the museum receives 19,000 visitors pa. It is estimated that a museum at Central Library will receive 200,000 visitors pa.
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Ward Councillor Views

1. Have Ward Councillors been asked for comments? Yes
2. Summary of Ward Councillors comments:

Orpington Councillors have received a large number of letters from pupils at primary schools in the area in support of museum facilities in Bromley. It is only due to the current financial circumstances that Orpington Councillors reluctantly accept the closure of the museum at the Priory in Orpington. The sale of the land immediately surrounding the Priory is not supported by Orpington Councillors. The car park is used by local people, particularly in the evenings, visiting restaurants and the British Legion Club, so a covenant for public use should be considered.

3. COMMENTARY

- 3.1 The 'Draft 2015/16 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19' report no. FSD15001, considered by the Executive on the 14 January, recommends that Bromley museum service's budget is cut for 2015/16 as part of the Council's £60million savings.
- 3.2 The results from the Council's 'Our Budget, Your Views' survey undertaken in Winter 2014 showed the museum service to be the lowest priority for residents in relation to the Council's wider culture and leisure offer. In contrast the survey showed heritage and arts to be a higher priority, and recent petitions and letters from schools have emphasised the need for the Council to continue providing access to the museum collection and learning about local history. These findings are corroborated by the public response to the Priory Revisited HLF bid consultation in 2013, which showed that residents feel strongly that the borough should provide a good quality heritage and cultural offer.
- 3.3 Bromley Museum is the Council's primary heritage offer. Currently the museum is open Monday to Friday and every other Saturday and receives up to 19,000 visits each year. The museum is responsible for a collection of almost 20,000 artefacts, including the nationally significant Lubbock collection.
- 3.4 Bromley Council is responsible for the Priory building, the Roman bath house on Poverest Road, and a collection of almost 20,000 objects and paintings. The Priory is Grade 2* listed and the oldest building in the borough. It is nationally significant and has an important and eminent history starting in the year 1290 as a stop for the Prior and his entourage's journey from Canterbury to London.
- 3.5 In 2013 extensive public consultation was undertaken to inform both the development of the Heritage Lottery Fund museum bid, and to assess the quality of the existing museum. The public response showed that the current museum offer is unsatisfactory. Common complaints were the lack of facilities, the difficult to access location, the lack of welcome and way finding, inaccessible building layout, and the poor standard of exhibitions.
- 3.6 In addition to Bromley Museum there are six other main sites in the borough regularly open to the public:
- Bethlem Museum of the Mind, West Wickham, a charity linked to the Maudsley NHS Foundation Trust, open Monday to Friday;
 - Crystal Palace Museum, open weekends and run by volunteers;
 - Gerald Moore Gallery, open Saturdays, part of Eltham College;
 - Chislehurst Caves, open Wednesday to Sunday, a commercial visitor attraction;
 - Down House, Downe, seasonal open hours, managed by English Heritage;
 - Crofton Roman Villa, Orpington, open during the summer and run by the Kent Archaeology Rescue Unit.
- The locations of these sites means that there are areas of the borough without easy access to heritage and cultural activity. There is no provision in Bromley Town Centre which has good public transport links to other areas of the borough.
- 3.7 In addition there are many heritage related Friends groups and local interest societies in the borough, such as the Chislehurst Society and Bromley Arts Council. These groups and the variety of activities they offer are relatively unknown to many residents. Several of these societies are brought together under the umbrella of the Bromley Heritage and Arts Forum which was set up in 2013 to promote heritage and arts activity in the borough.
- 3.8 The borough has a richer historic landscape, than many other neighbouring parts of London. The borough's heritage is valued by residents.

- There are 391 listed buildings in Bromley, a higher number than in many neighbouring boroughs including Bexley (112) and Croydon (149).
- There are eight Grade 1 listed buildings in Bromley, more than in Lambeth and Southwark.
- There are five registered parks and gardens, 45 Conservation Areas and nine scheduled ancient monuments.

- 3.9 In summary, Bromley has a rich historic landscape and heritage, however the borough's heritage and cultural offer is in some cases unsatisfactory, as in the case of Bromley Museum, and in other instances under promoted. Residents value having access to a local history museum, however the Council's existing primary offer, Bromley Museum at the Priory, is low quality and not providing good value for money. The cost to the Council is £8 per visit. Therefore a new approach to heritage and the provision of a local museum, without a revenue budget, is required.
- 3.10 Since the HLF bid was withdrawn Officers have met with museum staff and volunteers, local community groups and the Orpington BID, Bromley's heritage organisations, and a community interest company. All these stakeholders have been asked for their ideas of big changes that could be made at the museum to significantly reduce the running costs.
- 3.11 Ideas ranged from moving the museum to Bromley Central Library and finding a new use for the building (such as a school, fine dining restaurant, or wedding venue); to demolishing the 1950s library extension, building flats in its place and using the income to refurbish the museum in the Priory to enable it to increase its income to cover the cost of running the service. The feasibility of all ideas was considered.
- 3.12 The business planning work carried out as part of the HLF bid showed that even if the Priory is refurbished and additional income streams are created, such as a café, the revenue costs of managing and maintaining the museum at the Priory cannot be covered. Additionally the community interest company who declared an interest in the Priory during the recent stakeholder consultation determined that the cost of the capital works required to bring the Priory to a standard that allowed a range of activity to take place and increased access, prohibited the development of a community facility.
- 3.13 The Council does not have provision in its revenue budget to maintain and conserve the important Priory building. Therefore it is recommended that if the Executive agree to cut the museum service budget from 1st April 2015 the Priory site is disposed of on the open market and a proportion of the monies raised are effectively reinvested in the borough's heritage offer. Only a part year revenue saving will be achieved in 2015/16 as there will be utility, security and other associated costs incurred to protect the building in the interim period, until the building is sold.
- 3.14 If members agree to the closure and sale of the Priory, access arrangements and the Priory building's outside space will need to be determined prior to marketing, as it is situated in a public park and adjoining a public pay and display car park with shared access arrangements. It is proposed that the public car park in front of the Priory should close and be included in the sale, together with a small area of land to the rear and side of the building, to provide it with its own curtilage. Appendix A shows the area of land proposed for inclusion in the sale. Further information is detailed in Part 2 report DRR14/118 which should be read in conjunction with this report.
- 3.15 Members are recommended to declare the Priory surplus to Council requirements and agree that it is offered for sale on the open market. Any proposals by a purchaser to change the building will require Listed Building Consent and its important historic features should therefore

be safeguarded. The building has been used to provide a community facility, and, therefore, if the purchaser proposes to use it for a different purpose they will have to satisfy the Council's planning policies which resist the loss of community facilities unless there is no longer a need for them or alternative provision is made in an equally accessible location. In this circumstance the Council will provide supporting information regarding the reprovision of community facilities. The policies of the London Plan and the National Planning Policy Framework in relation to social infrastructure will also be relevant.

- 3.16 It is proposed that the museum exhibitions are relocated to Bromley Central Library where they can be more easily accessed by residents, and benefit from the library's facilities and resources. Two spaces in Central Library have been identified as suitable for museum exhibitions. One of these spaces would be dedicated to the Lubbock collection, a Nationally important collection which the Council is obliged to keep on public display, the other will exhibit star objects from the local history collection. The Council has an agreement with the Lubbock family that the Lubbock collection is not split up or sold; that the collection remains in the borough of Bromley and is accessible for inspection as a resource for historians and the general public; and that if these conditions cannot be met the Lubbock family may reclaim the collection or come to an agreement with the Council on another suitable home.
- 3.17 The Central Library currently receives 200,000 visitors each year, ten times more than the museum. Additionally, moving the museum to the library will complement the local studies and archives service located there. A design scheme has been developed for two high quality museum exhibitions in Central Library. Appendix B illustrates the proposed Central Library exhibition designs.
- 3.18 Members are therefore recommended to agree to allocate £395k of capital receipts to meet the costs of relocating the exhibition space to the Central Library, in effect reinvesting the capital receipt from the sale of the Priory in to the borough's heritage offer, primarily the installation of new museum exhibitions at Central Library. This approach of reinvesting money from heritage in to new quality heritage schemes without revenue requirements is recommended to form the basis of the borough's new approach to heritage.
- 3.19 In the event that the Executive agree to close Bromley Museum at the Priory, the two museum staff will be at risk of redundancy. Formal consultation began with the museum staff at risk of redundancy on the 9 January for a 30 day period. The outcome of this consultation will be reported back to the 11 February 2015 meeting of the Executive committee.
- 3.20 Due to current staffing arrangements (the Museum Curator is commencing maternity leave in February) the museum will only be able to offer a reduced service for the last two months of the 2014/15 financial year. Existing bookings will be honoured, however opening hours will be reduced.
- 3.21 The museum's collection of almost 20,000 objects and paintings will need to be rationalised. This process and the setting up of the new exhibitions at Central Library will require specialist resource, including an expert removal and handling company to transport artefacts, and an exhibition designer to professionally design the new exhibitions. The exhibition at Central Library will not be staffed. The collection is currently stored in a building in the Parks' Depôt in Priory Gardens, and even after the rationalisation process is undertaken the stores will be required to hold all the remaining collection which is not on display as alternative space in the Central Library has not been identified.
- 3.22 To enable improved public access to the rationalised collection, it is proposed that the collection catalogue is digitised. To increase residents' access to heritage and culture activity across the borough, it is proposed that a heritage promotional booklet is created to promote the borough's

local interest societies and heritage visitor attractions, so that more residents are aware that this offer exists.

3.23 Table 1 provides the capital costs of closing the Priory building and installing a new museum exhibition space at the Central Library:

Capital costs	2015/16 £'000
Creation of two new exhibition spaces and displays, including production of a digital catalogue, travelling exhibition facility and heritage promotional booklet	250
Specialist temporary resources for project management, rationalisation of the collection exhibits, closing the existing museum and the installation of the new exhibitions in the Central Library	115
Costs associated with the sale and disposal of furnishings, packing materials and rubbish removal	15
Costs associated with ceiling repairs, decoration and provision of new storage, and installation of a community display space for the Central Library	15
	<u>395</u>

4. POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 The 2015/16 Budget paper to the Executive on the 14 January 2015 set out a range of budget options for consideration by Members, including deleting the museum service at the Priory. The report highlighted the financial pressures facing the Council and the need to maintain strict financial control .

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

5. 1 This report is recommending that the Priory is declared surplus to requirements and that it is offered for sale on the open market.

5.2 The Executive is requested to agree that £395k of capital receipts are allocated to meet the costs of creating an exhibition space in the Central Library for the museum artefacts as detailed in Table 1 above. There would be no on-going running costs associated with the new exhibition space.

5.3 The table below summarises the revenue implications: -

	2015/16 £'000	2016/17 £'000	2017/18 £'000
2015/16 budget	152	152	152
Less estimated costs re utilities, business rates etc	-77	-30	0
Less net loss of parking income	0	-3	-3
Revenue saving	75	119	149
Less budget option outstanding from 2014/15	-75	-75	-75
Net revenue saving	<u>0</u>	<u>44</u>	<u>74</u>

- 5.4 It should be noted that the savings from the business rates will only be realised when the building is sold.
- 5.5 Should redundancy costs become payable, they will be met from the central contingency provision set aside for redundancy/early retirement costs arising from budget options.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Section 123 of the 1972 Local Government Act requires a local authority to secure the best consideration reasonably obtainable when it disposes of land (other than on a lease of 7 years or less) unless it has the benefit of an express or general consent of the Secretary of State. This property would be offered for sale on the open market to ensure compliance with this requirement.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposals set out in this report to Members recommend to the Executive that the Priory Museum is declared surplus to operational requirements with effect from 1 April 2015 and this has implications for the two members of staff at the Museum who will be at risk of redundancy if the proposal is agreed. The Executive on 11 February will consider the comments from staff, trade union, staff side secretary and departmental representatives following the period of formal consultation on the proposals for the Museum which commenced on 9 January 2015 for a period of 30 days. The Executive will also consider any comments from the R and R PDS Committee. If the Executive Members agree to the recommendations any staffing implications arising from these recommendations will need to be carefully managed in accordance with Council policies and procedures and with due regard to the existing framework of employment law.

Non-Applicable Sections:	
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	22 nd July 2014 Bromley Museum at the Priory, DRR14/070