

**WRITTEN QUESTIONS TO THE RENEWAL AND RECREATION
PORTFOLIO HOLDER**

Questions from Councillor William Huntington-Thresher

Q1. What steps will be taken to protect the Priory, both inside and out, from 1 April 2015?

Portfolio Holder's Response

The Council's property team are aware of the proposals to declare the Priory surplus to operational requirements and for the building to be disposed of on the open market. They will as part of this process determine what additional security measures will be required to protect the building during this process. A budget has been identified to ensure that any additional security measures can be funded. English Heritage best practice guidance will be utilised.

Q2. What insurance or other arrangements will be put in place to reinstate the Priory should it deteriorate after 1 April 2015?

Portfolio Holder's Response

The building will remain on the Council's insurance until the point of disposal.

Questions from Ms Cassie Moran

Q1. How would Bromley Council explain their decision to sell the Grade 2 listed Priory to future generations who, having weathered short term economic constraints, will be deprived in the long term of public access to the borough's prime heritage asset?*

Portfolio Holder's Response

Given the continuing economic pressure placed on the Council and the requirement to reduce expenditure by around £60m over the next four years the Council is faced with taking a significant number of difficult decisions. As such the Council is unable to commit revenue budgets going forward to maintain and conserve the Priory building and therefore the building does not benefit from being in local authority ownership. Any proposals by a purchaser to change the building will require Listed Building Consent and its important historic features should therefore be safeguarded. The importance

of the Priory is recognised, and how the building is marketed will be given due consideration.

Q2. As results from the Council's 'Our Budget, Your Views' survey showed heritage to be a high priority for residents, and the public response to the Priory Revisited HLF bid consultation showed that residents feel strongly that the borough should provide a good quality heritage and cultural offer, how will Bromley Council ensure that it will continue to provide good and facilitated access to the museum collection and provide good quality learning about local history?

Portfolio Holder's Response

Considerable thought has been given to how the Council can best provide access to the museum collections without a revenue budget to support them, which is why the recommendation includes the allocation of £395 capital receipts which will pay for the installation of two high quality exhibitions in Central Library, the digitisation of the collection, a refurbished community exhibition space, online independent learning material, and promotional material for the borough's whole heritage offer. It is anticipated that by moving the museum exhibitions to central library visits will increase from 19k per annum to over 200k per annum.

Q3. How will Bromley Council protect and enhance the nationally significant Lubbock collection, as well as the museum's collection of almost 20,000 artefacts?

Portfolio Holder's Response

One of the new exhibitions will be dedicated to the Lubbock collection, and there will be more artefacts from the collection on display in the new exhibition than there are currently at the Priory. The second exhibition space will showcase the most important and interesting artefacts from the rest of the local history collection. These new exhibitions will be professionally designed and curated, with the exhibition artefacts chosen and themes developed with input from local interest groups and residents, and interpreted to a higher standard than at Bromley Museum now. Artefacts not on display will remain secure in the stores in Priory gardens.

Questions from Mr Stewart Vassie, Joint Chair of The Friends of the Priory and Gardens, Orpington

Q1. Will Cllr Morgan explain how if, as he states, the Council is too poor to be able to undertake a 25 year Heritage Fund commitment. How will it afford to maintain the other heritage sites in Orpington?

Portfolio Holder's Response

The Council recognises Bromley's rich heritage and that it is valued by residents, but, a significant part of our duty is also to balance the public purse and hence take difficult decisions. This is why the recommendation includes the allocation of £395 capital receipts which will largely pay for the installation of two high quality exhibitions in Central Library. These new exhibitions will be professionally designed and curated, with the exhibition artefacts chosen and themes developed with input from local interest groups and residents. The results will be exhibitions of a far higher standard than currently exist at Bromley Museum for the benefit of all. These exhibitions will be permanent. The whole collection will be digitised so that the public can access information about the wider collection which will not be on display. We will be continuing to support the Crofton Roman Villa in Orpington.

Q2. If the Council is too poor to be able to fund a professional curator for Bromley museum, who is qualified to handle and maintain the artefacts it presently owns?

Portfolio Holder's Response

The Head of Local Studies and Archives who has considerable experience in managing the Local Studies archives in the Central Library.

Q3. As there is no qualified heritage official on the Council staff or on the Council, how does the R&R Committee evaluate its heritage priorities?

The Council will continue to work with all of the Heritage Groups in the borough as well as statutory bodies such as English Heritage. There is a Conservation Officer at The Council based within the Planning Section.

Questions from Mr Lyulph Lubbock

Q1. I have made representations (e-mail, 23/1/15) to Cllr Carr, Cllr Morgan and Colin Brand about the implications - generally and specifically for the Lubbock collection and look forward to their detailed response; can I also be assured my e-mail has been made available to Committee members before the meeting?

Portfolio Holder's Response

It is recognised by the Council that the Lubbock collection is of national importance and that it is not currently being exhibited to its best advantage, limiting public access and understanding. The proposal as set out in the report will allow more of the Lubbock collection to be on permanent public display than at present and for the collection to be more accessible and engaging, through new interpretation and a high quality exhibition.

Q2. Would the Committee please respond to my representations about the care and security of items (including those in the Lubbock Collection) which will remain in store, particularly the Griset paintings; will satisfactory curatorial and conservation provisions be made?

Portfolio Holder's Response

The museum store will continue to be maintained and will be overseen by the Head of Archives and Local Studies.

Q3. Would the committee please respond to my representations about the proposed new exhibition, namely the lack of future outreach, lack of future professional input and static nature leading to diminishing public interest?

Portfolio Holder's Response

Significant thought has been given to how the Council can best provide access to the museum collections without a revenue budget to support them. The report includes a recommendation on the allocation of £395k of capital receipts which will, in addition to funding the exhibition, will also fund on line independent learning material, the digitisation of the collection which will be publicly accessible, and promotional material for the borough's whole heritage offer. In addition to the permanent exhibitions there will be a refurbished community exhibition space for temporary exhibitions, and consideration is being given to display more of the art collection at Council owned buildings across the borough. Furthermore, it is anticipated that by moving the museum offer, the displays will potentially be viewed by in excess of 200,000 people against the 19,000 that currently visit the museum.

Questions from Ms Carol Pitman

Q1. If the Council does sell the Priory Building, can it ensure that it would continue to be accessible to the public, delaying sale (if necessary) until an appropriate buyer is found, with Council reserves covering interim costs, if this could reasonably provide better financial ,and non-financial, value for council taxpayers?

Portfolio Holder's Response

If the decision is taken to move the exhibition to the Central Library, it is envisaged that the museum will close by the 1st April 2015. During the interim period between closure and the opening of the new exhibition, there is a substantial amount of work to do in terms of the emptying the museum and rationalising the collection in preparation for the new exhibition which will take place at the Priory site.

Q2. The sale of the Priory building would prioritise short term budgetary requirements over long term benefits to the community. In its cost-benefit analysis of the sale of the building, what non-financial costs were identified, and how does the Council intend to mitigate the effect of those costs and social effects?

Portfolio Holder's Response

The proposal set out in the report seeks to contribute to addressing the long term financial pressures facing the Council which are likely to continue for some time. The proposal also recognises that for some time now there has been an overwhelming dissatisfaction with the quality of the current museum and its offer, with limited visitor numbers. We sought to originally address this via an innovative Heritage Lottery Fund application, but the revenue implications of pursuing this route were prohibitive. The proposal as set out, allows for a high quality exhibition offer, backed by an on line educational resource and promotional material to promote the broader heritage offer in Bromley, whilst simultaneously addressing the need to reduce revenue budgets. , the Council has explored all avenues for keeping a museum service at the Priory with a reduced revenue budget. 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 in the Priory building cannot be covered. Additionally a successful community interest company who declared an interest in the Priory during the recent stakeholder consultation determined after scrutinising the figures, 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 in this building

Q3. In the rationalisation the museum's collection of 20,000 objects and paintings, how much weight will be given to the importance of keeping the items for the benefit of future generations, how much to the ongoing maintenance costs of the collection, and is the rationalisation expected to raise revenue?

Portfolio Holder's Response

Firstly it is important to say that the Council recognises the importance of keeping its current collection for the benefit of future generations. The rationalisation programme is unlikely to generate revenue, if items are considered inappropriate to keep in the collection, they should first be offered back to the original donor and then potentially if this is not successful to another local museum, before any external disposal is considered. There are objects in the collection which are not related to Bromley and should not have been acquisitioned. The Museum Association's guidance on honing collections and disposing of artefacts will be followed.