

Decision Maker: Executive

Date: 10th June 2015

Decision Type: Non-Urgent Executive Non-Key

Title: BROMLEY MUSEUM, AND THE PRIORY ORPINGTON

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Chief Officer: Executive Director of Environment & Community Services

Ward: Bromley Town; Orpington;

1. Reason for report

- 1.1 The museum service was identified as a budget saving for 2015/16 in the 14 January 2015 Executive Committee report, as part of the £60million savings required.
- 1.2 The wide variety of consultation and work undertaken by officers shows that overall the current museum standard is weak, however heritage and arts is valued by residents. Therefore a new approach to heritage, and the provision of a local museum with significantly reduced revenue costs, is required.
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2. **RECOMMENDATION(S)**

The Executive is recommended to agree:

- 2.1 **The cessation of the museum service at the Priory, Orpington, and the provision of new museum exhibitions at Central Library, Bromley, managed by Local Studies and Archives.**
- 2.2 **The Priory is declared surplus to operational requirements with effect from 1 October 2015 and, subject to further work by Strategic Property Services on other Council uses for the building, authority is given to offer the property for sale on the open market.**

- 2.3 At its meeting on 10 June 2015, the Executive comments on the outcome of staff consultation; and that subject to any issues that may have arisen during consultation, endorses the proposal to cease the museum service.**
- 2.4 The Executive approve the allocation of £395k from capital receipts for the relocation of exhibitions, to add the scheme to the capital programme, and the allocation of £15k per annum revenue to Local Studies and Archives to commission temporary exhibitions and care for the collection.**

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 cost of £31k for 2015/16, a net revenue cost of £33k for 2016/17 and a net additional revenue saving of £12k for 2017/18 onwards (provided the building is sold)
 3. Budget head/performance centre: Priory Museum
 4. Total current budget for this head: £74k
 5. Source of funding: Existing revenue budget for 2015/16
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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: S123 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 fewer than 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:

Cllr Michael Rutherford said that the arrival of the museum in Bromley Town will be good news for the town centre, adding character and a sense of place. I hope that the library can bring extra visitors to see the museum and vice versa.

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, recommended that Bromley museum service's budget is cut as part of the Council's £60million savings.
- 3.2 The results of 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. The survey showed heritage and arts to be a higher priority. These results corroborate the findings of the extensive public consultation undertaken in 2013 to inform both the development of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 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. Additionally, after the HLF bid was withdrawn officers 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 were asked for their ideas of big changes that could be made at the museum to significantly reduce the running costs.
- 3.3 As a result of the detailed work and community consultation carried out by officers on the museum between the years of 2009 and 2014, including the development of the HLF bid, officers recommended to Members in February 2015 that the museum be relocated to Central Library (to improve access to, and the standard of, exhibitions, and achieve revenue savings) and the Priory building be disposed of on the open market.
- 3.4 In February 2015 the Portfolio Holder for Renewal and Recreation made a public statement requesting that before a decision was made by the Executive, officers investigated, and had further discussions with interested parties, about:
- How best to operate the museum if it is moved to Central Library. How existing staff in the Local Studies section could contribute and how volunteers could assist with education and temporary exhibitions, and where the many paintings and other art works might be hung in various public buildings around the Borough.
 - If it is decided to move the museum from the Priory, what uses might be appropriate for the building bearing in mind its importance and its future upkeep.
 - The future of Orpington town centre and how the Priory can contribute to the health of the local economy.
- The Portfolio Holder requested that, once this work had been completed, officers bring a report to the Executive in June for a decision on the future of the museum and the Priory.
- 3.5 Officers duly undertook this work during February to May 2015, and met with additional groups and individuals who had contacted the Council requesting that they be consulted on the future of the museum and Priory, and with other groups, such as Aynscombe Angle residents, whom officers considered would be most impacted by the proposed changes.
- 3.6 An online survey was created and promoted in Central Library, at the museum, and online. The survey was open throughout the whole of April. The survey questions were all in line with the Portfolio Holder's statement. The survey was completed by 576 Bromley residents and the results can be found in appendix A.
- 3.7 In summary, the additional consultation has shown that a group of residents (including 34% of those who completed the survey) would like the museum to continue at the Priory. They see the building as a community asset and feel strongly that a museum is the best use for the building. However, no proposals have yet been forthcoming as to how this can be achieved with no

significant revenue contribution from the Council, or how a sustainable business model could be developed with a museum as the primary use for the building. Since the February Executive the Priory has been registered as an Asset of Community Value, and one community group has indicated that they will be looking to develop a business plan during the next six months to make the case for the building being transferred to them for community arts use. The survey results showed that 58% of people would prefer the building to be a place for community activity, rather than used for another Council service or sold to a commercial business owner.

- 3.8 However, although there is a strong desire by some people to see the building used by the community as a museum/ arts facility, the work that officers have undertaken over the last five years demonstrates that this is not a sustainable use for the building. Additionally, the recent online survey results show that 38% of people think that the Central Library is a suitable location for the museum. Additionally 54% said that the art collection should be displayed in the libraries across the borough, above any other locations.
- 3.9 Officers met with Historic England (previously English Heritage) on the 25th February to discuss the future of the building. Consequently Historic England commissioned, and paid for, an expert consultancy (Fourth Street) to review all the work Bromley officers had undertaken to develop the HLF bid, including the consultation on the current museum service and the business planning. This work was an independent review of officers' work to ensure that all due diligence was taken, and to provide information for potential new owners of the building. Their final report can be found in appendix B. In summary the report says that the Priory is not a viable location for the museum and that Central Library is a better location for a local history museum. The report says that officers rigorously applied all due diligence, and that the Council has demonstrated a commitment to trying to find a solution for this historic building by pursuing the HLF bid. The report says that the business planning was robust and the quality of work exceptional. This independent review confirms that the museum remaining at the Priory is not a viable option.
- 3.10 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 autumn 2014 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 at the Priory.
- 3.11 The Historic England commissioned report estimates the cost of restoring the building, making it accessible, and incorporating all the required facilities, based on the detailed work carried out as part of the HLF bid, to be just under £1.7m. Therefore any new owner or leaseholder, including a community group, would need to have access to or be able to raise £1.7m, to carry out the necessary building works to enable the building to be fully utilised.
- 3.12 The most successful way of protecting historic buildings is for them to be in use, and for that use to generate funds to properly care for and maintain the historic fabric. The report suggests that the following uses may on this basis be suitable for the Priory building:
- Creative workspace or 'maker space', e.g. Cockpit Arts and Makerversity.
 - Rehearsal/ recording/ teaching/ back office space for cultural organisations, e.g. Chetham's School of Music.
 - Niche digital cinema, e.g. Kino Cinema.
 - Meetings and functions venue, e.g. Pembroke Lodge.
 - Higher/ further education space or 'leisure learning' space, e.g. Percy House.
 - Landmark Trust use, e.g. as short term residential or holiday letting.
 - Live Music venue.

- Childcare provision.
- Healthcare or hospice.

3.13 The Historic England commissioned report made recommendations for how the building should be marketed. The report recommends that if the building is put on the market for sale, that the property team undertake a targeted marketing exercise by making operators of these suggested uses aware that the property is for sale. This approach may also allow interested purchasers to come together to provide a multi-use solution for the site. This would be carried out in conjunction with a wider marketing exercise, in which offers would be sought on the open market.

3.14 Not all these suggested uses are likely to be popular with local residents and community groups. Following the Portfolio Holder's instructions in February 2015 officers attended 16 consultation meetings with 11 different groups/organisations/individuals during spring 2015. The feedback from these meetings is summarised here, and more detailed feedback can be found in appendix C.

- The Orpington Bid (Business Improvement District) would like the Priory to be an asset that enhances the local economy. The Orpington Bid feels that the area lacks cultural opportunities for local residents and therefore would favour a cultural use for the building.
- An organised community group, along with the Friends of the Priory and Priory Gardens, want the building to remain in public ownership or to be taken in to community ownership. They initially wanted to resurrect the HLF bid and/or see the Priory continue as a home for the museum, however they are now developing a proposal and business plan for the building as a commercial arts/heritage venue.
- Current museum volunteers would prefer the museum to stay at the Priory and the site developed as a cultural destination. If the museum exhibitions are moved to Central Library they would like volunteering opportunities to continue, for collection care to be undertaken, and for there to be learning and participation opportunities available to a wide range of audiences.
- The borough's heritage and arts organisations, and other consultees wish the future security of the collection and Priory building to be assured. Specifically the group want assurance that the building will be cared for properly during a disposal process, and for curatorial expertise and collection care to be prioritised as part of any new museum offer.
- The schools consulted want a museum education offer to continue, and continued access to the handling boxes. Their preference is for the museum to stay at the Priory and for education sessions to continue from this location.
- Aynscombe Angle residents enjoy the peaceful atmosphere of the area. They would prefer the building to continue as a museum, however if that is not possible their preference is for the site to become residential. They are anti a use related to the night time economy or that generates noise.
- Lord Avebury and Lyulph Lubbock's main concern is that the integrity of the Lubbock collection remains intact and is accessible to the public.
- The Arts Council is not opposed to the proposed move to Central Library, however they feel strongly that collections care expertise should be part of the new museum offer and that a solution found to continue related learning and participation activity.
- The group of young people consulted with were broadly supportive of the proposed move to Central Library and were interested in the range of possible new uses for the Priory. There was no clear favoured use for the building from this group.

3.15 In conclusion, the Priory is not a suitable venue for the museum, and although many people in the community would like to see the museum continue at the Priory, the additional consultation has not brought to light an alternative sustainable solution for the museum service to continue

there. Therefore the future of the Priory and the future of the museum now need to be considered separately.

The museum

- 3.16 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.
- 3.17 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.
- 3.18 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 at least £8 per visit. For that reason a new approach to heritage and the provision of a local history museum with significantly reduced revenue costs, is required.
- 3.19 Therefore 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. The Central Library currently receives 468,000 visitors, including 200,000 active users, each year, many times more than the museum. Disability access is far better at Central Library. Additionally, moving the museum to the library will complement the Local Studies and Archives service located there.
- 3.20 Three 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 committed to keep on public display, the second would exhibit the most important objects from the local history collection, and the third would be a temporary exhibition space for Council and community use. A design scheme has been developed for the two permanent high quality museum exhibitions in Central Library. Appendix D illustrates the concept Central Library exhibition designs. It is envisaged that paintings on display within the Lubbock collection exhibition will be rotated to provide increased public access. Local residents and specialist groups will be engaged with the development of the exhibitions, which will use the HLF work, which was advised by the British Museum, English Heritage and the Museum of London, as its starting place.
- 3.21 A small revenue budget of £15k per annum will be required to enable Local Studies and Archives to commission bi-annual special temporary exhibitions and care for the wider collection.
- 3.22 In the event that the Executive agree to cease the museum service 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 is detailed in appendix E. The exhibitions at Central Library will not be staffed, but will be overseen by Local Studies and Archives.

- 3.23 If Members agree to relocate the museum exhibitions to Central Library the museum service will cease to run at the Priory from the 1st October 2015.
- 3.24 The museum's collection of almost 20,000 objects and paintings will need to be rationalised. There are objects within the collection that should not have been acquired as they do not meet the museum's collecting policy and are not related to the history of Bromley. The Museum Association's disposal toolkit will be used to guide the rationalisation process. This rationalisation 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. These will be one off costs as shown in table one.
- 3.25 The collection is currently stored in an environmentally controlled building in the Parks' Depot 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. Therefore the collection stores will remain unchanged.
- 3.26 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 cultural 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. It is also proposed that online learning materials are produced for use by schools and families visiting the exhibitions, and that the art collection is displayed in more public buildings across the borough.
- 3.27 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 and all associated activity; and to agree an annual revenue budget for the museum of £15k per annum to deliver the temporary exhibitions and collections care.
- 3.28 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
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- 3.29 Officers have looked at other models for delivering museum education and will continue to explore zero cost options for delivering learning and participation sessions related to the new museum exhibitions at Central Library. One possibility may be private sector provision, another may be to train volunteers (Crofton Roman Villa model), another may be to set up a pool of casual staff trained to deliver education sessions as and when they are booked. Central library has all the facilities required for education sessions to take place there, including the halls which can accommodate large group activity.

The Priory

- 3.30 The online survey results showed that residents would prefer the building to stay in community, or other Council, use rather than for it to be sold to a private commercial owner. The building is considered by many to be very important to the community and the geography and history of the local area. There is a petition, led by resident Margot Rohan, which has received over 2,000 signatures, which has been signed by people in part to demonstrate their wish that the building remain in public ownership.
- 3.31 A community group nominated the Priory as an Asset of Community Value in April. This nomination was accepted. The Localism Act 2011 requires local authorities to keep a list of assets which are of community value. Once an asset is placed on the list it usually remains there for five years and cannot be sold unless the nominating group is notified of the intended sale and the sale is also publicised locally to enable other community groups to consider putting in a bid. If a community group notifies the local authority within six weeks that it wishes to be treated as a potential bidder the property cannot be sold for a period of six months (including the initial six week period) except to a community group. This period is known as 'the moratorium' during which a relevant community group has time to put together a proposal and raise funding. However, it does not give any community group a right to acquire a property and, at the end of the moratorium, it is entirely up to the land owner whether a sale goes through, to whom, and for how much.
- 3.32 Strategic Property Services is investigating whether the building could accommodate other Council services, such as Registrars and Electoral Services, thereby keeping it in public ownership. If the findings of this work show that the Priory site is not suitable for another Council use, it is recommended that the building is then offered for sale. Operators of the building uses identified in the Historic England commissioned report could be specifically advised of the availability of the property as part of the marketing exercise. Community groups will be given the opportunity to put together a bid in accordance with The Asset of Community Value Regulations (i.e. during the six month moratorium period). In autumn 2015 Strategic Property will then review the options and will either enter discussions with the community group about leasing or selling the building to them, or will offer the building for sale on the open market. The marketing of the building should commence before the museum closes if possible to minimise the period for which it is vacant and to minimise the premises costs. A report on the outcome of the marketing of the building will be presented to Members.
- 3.33 Historic England's guidelines for protecting empty historic buildings, and disposing of historic buildings, will be followed by the Council if either situation presents itself. It is important that the building is not left empty for long periods of time. It is likely that there will be museum related activity in the building until the end of December 2015, as if the museum ceases at the Priory from the 1st October, it will take approximately three months to empty the building and carry out the collection rationalisation and digitisation works required to be undertaken from this location.

- 3.34 If the building is disposed of on the open market, or transferred to a community group, any proposals by a new owner 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.

Orpington Town Centre

- 3.35 The Council and its partners have worked successfully over recent years to tackle the challenges that Orpington town centre faces, and improvements have included:
- New Odeon cinema and leisure and retail development commenced.
 - Relocated library facilities.
 - Major public realm improvements to the High Street.
 - Refurbishment and rebuild of Orpington College.
 - Planning permission granted for new residential units, and Health and Wellbeing Centre and Hotel in the Walnut Centre.
 - Orpington 1st Business Improvement District (BID) formed in 2013 with the aim "to make Orpington town centre better for business".
- 3.36 The Council has recently secured funding from the Mayor's High Street Fund and the New Homes Bonus (NHB) 2015/16 allocation to take forward a range of further improvements in Orpington. One of these projects will be the drafting of a business development strategy for the town which will be undertaken by Orpington 1st and funded from the NHB allocation. It is anticipated that the results of this work will be considered as part of the Local Plan review. Members will, no doubt, take this work into consideration if a decision is made to market the Priory when they consider the outcome of the marketing exercise.

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 museum exhibitions should be provided at the Central Library, and that the Priory building is declared surplus to operational requirements with effect from 1st October 2015 and approval is sought to offer the property 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. Approval is also sought to agree an annual revenue budget of £15k in order to deliver the temporary exhibitions and collections care.

5.3 The following table summarises the revenue implications: -

	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
	£'000	£'000	£'000
2014/15 budget	152	152	152
Less savings built into 2015/16 budget	(78)	(78)	(78)
2015/16 budget	74	74	74
Less future savings built into the forecast	0	(44)	(44)
Net on-going budget	74	30	30
Less net loss of parking income	0	(3)	(3)
Less estimated costs re staff, utilities, rates etc	(105)	(45)	0
Less on-going cost for exhibitions & collection care	0	(15)	(15)
Net revenue saving/(cost)	(31)	(33)	12

- 5.4 The result of the additional consultation carried out during March to May 2015 has meant that the savings built into the 2015/16 budget will not be achieved, however officers will endeavour to find alternative savings to meet the potential overspend of £31k.
- 5.5 After taking account of the £44k savings built into the forecast for 2016/17, should Members agree the £15k annual revenue budget to fund the delivery of the temporary exhibitions and collections care, there will be a net additional cost of £33k for 2016/17. From 2017/18 onwards, additional net savings of £12k will be achieved, providing the savings from the business rates are realised.
- 5.6 It should be noted that the savings from the business rates will only be realised when the building is sold.
- 5.7 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.
- 5.8 Bearing in mind the £1.7m estimated cost of restoring the building as provided by The Historic England report, the Strategic Property officers will have to ensure that a detailed cost benefit analysis of all of the potential options of moving any Council service into the existing Priory building is carried out. This would have to include a potential revenue growth bid of £60k to meet the estimated on-going annual premises costs of the building as well as any future repair and maintenance costs.

6. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 So far as the effects of the Localism Act 2011 (assets of community value) are concerned, these are contained in the body of the report.
- 6.2 If the Council proposes to sell the property then 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. Marketing the property is the usual method of ensuring compliance with this requirement.

7. PERSONNEL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The proposals set out in this report to Members recommend to the Executive the cessation of the museum at the Priory from 1st October 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. They will be considered for redeployment subject of course to availability of suitable alternative roles elsewhere in the organisation. There are no TUPE issues arising from any of the specific proposals or recommendations in this report. The Executive on 10 June will consider the comments from staff, trade union, 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:	[List non-applicable sections here]
Background Documents: (Access via Contact Officer)	<p>11 February 2015 A new approach for Bromley Museum, DRR14/116 (Part 1 and Part 2)</p> <p>14 January 2015 Draft 2015/16 Budget and Update on Council's Financial Strategy 2016/17 to 2018/19', FSD15001</p> <p>22 July 2014 Bromley Museum at the Priory, DRR14/070</p>