

Appendix A: The future of the Priory and Bromley Museum online survey results

The online survey was conducted over a one month period, April 2015, providing an opportunity for residents who did not attend consultation meetings to provide their views on the future of the Priory and Bromley Museum as set out by the Portfolio holder.

The purpose of the survey was to capture Bromley residents' views and ideas across the following three areas:

1. How best to operate the museum if the exhibitions are moved to Bromley Central Library. How existing staff in Local Studies can contribute, and how volunteers can assist both with the educational element of the displays and the setting up of new displays on a twice a year basis.
2. If it is decided to move the museum from the Priory, what uses might be appropriate for the building bearing in mind its importance to the town centre economy and the future upkeep of this very important listed building.
3. How the Priory can contribute to the health of the local economy bearing in mind current development and plans for Orpington town centre, for example the new cinema, health centre and public realm improvements scheduled.

The online survey was promoted in Bromley Central Library, at the Priory, and on the Council website. Hard copies of the survey were provided to those without internet access.

The online survey was completed by 576 people. Not all questions were answered by everyone.

May 2015

Question 1 asked people where they lived.

The results show that 29% of respondents lived in Orpington and 26% of people lived in Chislehurst. Combined, these two towns made up 314 respondents out of the 574 people that answered the question. Note that 8% said they did not live in the borough.

Question 2 asked is there another public place within the borough of Bromley which you think the exhibitions should be moved to rather than Central Library? Only places with no or minimal overhead costs are likely to be considered.

Overall opinion was divided between those who saw central library as the most suitable place for the exhibitions and those who would like the exhibitions to be kept at the Priory. Only 203 people answered this question.

Response category	Percentage of respondents	Summary and sample comments
No, there is not another public place within the borough of Bromley which the exhibitions should be moved to rather than Central Library.	38%	The majority of respondents that answered 'no' did not elaborate on this this question. Those that did elaborate, answered that a benefit of the museum moving to Central Library would be its central location: <i>"Central library a great idea; hopefully should increase footfall and library usage"</i> <i>"Central library is the best place, would get much more use in prominent position"</i>
The Priory, Orpington	34%	A significant percentage of respondents expressed that the exhibitions should be kept at the Priory. Frequent responses concerned the potential loss of a local cultural asset and the resulting impact on the community: <i>"I would like it to remain where it is in the Priory, the museum is an important asset we should not give up."</i> <i>"I don't think any spaces will be as good as the current Priory building: not enough space. You need a whole building rather than one or two cases."</i>
Branch libraries	7%	The use of branch libraries to exhibit the collection was suggested as an alternative to Central Library. No additional detail was given by respondents. Orpington, Chislehurst, Petts Wood, Biggin Hill and Hayes libraries were all suggested.
Council offices	6%	The Civic Centre was suggested as a suitable public place, for example the reception area.
Other comments	5%	Other comments include: <i>"There will be hardly any places that can be fitted out as a museum that would involve minimal or no overhead costs."</i>
Commercial	2%	It was expressed that the display of the collection in the Intu shopping centre would help reach new audiences:

Community buildings and places of worship	2%	Reponses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chislehurst society building • Keston mosque
Schools and colleges	2%	Responses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bromley College • Schools
Civic halls	2%	Reponses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beckenham Public Hall • Crofton Halls • Bromley Civic Hall
Leisure centre, hospitals and health centres	1%	Reponses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Walnuts Leisure Centre • Chislehurst Golf Club
Not Sure	1%	

Question 3 asked which of the following do you consider to be the most important?

- Caring for and conserving Bromley's local history collection of 20,000 artefacts.
- Access to the local history collection for research.
- Professionally curated temporary exhibitions taking place twice a year showcasing more artefacts from the collection.
- Providing learning and engagement opportunities with the museum collection for schools and other groups.

The results showed that the majority, 45%, think that conserving the local history collection is most important, followed by 39% who prioritised learning and engagement with the collection. Only 9% prioritised temporary exhibitions, and 7% access for research.

Question 4 asked do you think volunteers could successfully support exhibitions at Central Library in the following ways?

- Stewarding the exhibitions and talking to visitors about the artefacts on display.
- Creating the temporary exhibitions.
- Supporting the Local Studies Service in the creation of the temporary exhibitions.
- Leading school visits to the exhibitions and engaging school children with the collection.

Respondents selected either yes, maybe or no to each suggestion. Only 108 responses were received in total.

The results showed that the majority thought volunteers could most successfully steward the exhibitions and talk to visitors about the artefacts on display, supporting temporary exhibitions was second, followed by leading school visits, and finally respondents felt that volunteers would least be able to create temporary exhibitions themselves.

Respondents were also asked if there were other ways they thought volunteers could support the exhibitions and the care of the collection. This question was an open-ended question. A summary of these ideas has been categorised and presented in the following table:

Response category	Percentage of respondents	Summary and sample comments
Opposed to the use of volunteers	33%	<p>The majority of respondents expressed concern about the use of volunteers for the exhibitions. A particular worry is that the exhibitions should be run by professionals and people with the knowledge to care for and support the collection:</p> <p><i>“Museums should be key and professionally run, not by volunteers as a short sighted manner of saving funds while losing an essential resource”</i></p> <p><i>“There is a lot that volunteers *can* do - but they should not do it instead of paid professionals.”</i></p>
Professional training provided	21%	<p>It was expressed that professional training that supervises and/or educates volunteers would be essential for them to be able to support the exhibitions:</p>
Promotion, networking and fundraising	19%	<p>Nearly a fifth of total respondents felt volunteers publicising the collection would help support the exhibitions. This included digital engagement and fundraising:</p> <p><i>“hand out flyers to spread awareness”</i></p> <p><i>“Publicity and allocated conservation/digitisation projects”</i></p> <p><i>“Liaising with local history and cultural groups and classes - e.g.: adult ed. and U3A”</i></p>
Collection Care	12%	<p>Suggestions of collection care included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cataloguing • Research • Overall preservation of collection
No/Cannot think of any	6%	-
Running activities	3%	<p>Suggestions included activities such as walks, talks and children's events.</p>
Volunteer knowledge and Interest in the collection	2%	<p>It was expressed that volunteers already have the required skills to enhance understanding of the collection to the public.</p>

Question 5 asked which of the following additional skills and resources respondents thought Local Studies staff would need to manage the collection of objects and temporary exhibitions.

- Access to training and professional expertise.
- Training in curating exhibitions.
- Access to a digital catalogue of the museum collection.
- Access to funds to create higher quality temporary exhibitions.
- Access to funds for collection care materials.

The overall consensus was that Local Studies staff would require skills and resources across all five areas. As part of question 5, respondents could also specify other additional skills and resources that Local Studies staff would need to manage the collection of objects, and the temporary exhibitions. Many people reinforced the need to train and provide support to Local Studies staff, others said that Local Studies should not be taking on the role of overseeing the exhibitions at all.

Question 6 said the Council has a large collection of drawings and paintings we would like to put on display, so that residents across the borough can see and enjoy the artwork. Are there any public places in the borough you would particularly like to see a few of Bromley's paintings displayed? For example libraries.

The responses show that libraries are the most popular location. This was an open-ended question and respondents were able to provide multiple answers. A summary of these ideas have been categorised and are presented in the table below. Some people gave multiple answers which is why the total percentages exceed 100.

Response category	Percentage of respondents	Summary and sample comments
Libraries	54%	<p>Over half of respondents felt that displaying Bromley's artwork in libraries was the best location:</p> <p><i>"Libraries a good idea to show local painting and also paintings of local painters who lived in a specific area"</i></p> <p><i>"They should be on public display as much and in as many locations (including libraries of course) as possible, as a matter of regular practice"</i></p> <p><i>"Libraries where more people will have access"</i></p>
Priory	14%	<p>Respondents felt that the Priory, either as a museum or not, could house parts of the collection:</p> <p><i>"The Priory- museum and art in one central location"</i></p> <p><i>"Would prefer to keep the museum open and keep the paintings/artefacts and collection all in one place to be cared for"</i></p>
Schools and colleges	12%	<p>Respondents answered schools would be a good place to hold items of the art collection but that security would be of concern:</p> <p><i>"Schools could hold exhibitions for local residents. It would be instructive for pupils. However, the problem of security springs to mind"</i></p>
Commercial spaces	12%	<p>Respondents suggested that Intu and The Walnuts could hold temporary exhibitions. Other suggestions included restaurants, shop windows and banks.</p>

Community buildings/ places of worship	11%	Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Widmore Centre • Exhibitions in churches
Hospitals, health centres and care homes	9%	
Entertainment and leisure facilities	6%	Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Churchill Theatre • Cinemas • Sport centres
Heritage and arts centres	6%	Suggestions included the Ripley Arts Centre.
Council offices	4%	
Other comments	4%	Other comments included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Setting up a digital catalogue and website for the items. • Having exhibitions at train stations (such as the photography exhibit in Waterloo)
Civic halls	2%	Suggestions included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beckenham Town Hall • Crofton Halls • Orpington Village Hall

Question 7 asked, if the museum exhibitions move out of the Priory, and if the following options presented themselves, which of the following respondents were most likely to prefer.

- The building is sold and transferred to a community group or social interest company with a sustainable business plan for the site, who will use the building as a place for community activity.
- The building is retained by the Council and used to house a different Council service.
- The building is purchased by a commercial business owner who refurbishes the building and changes its use. This use could be anything from a private school to a gastropub, it is currently unknown who may be interested in purchasing the building and for what use.

Over half of respondents 58% favoured the building being sold or transferred to a community group or social interest company, followed by 32% who favoured the building being retained by the Council, and 10% who favoured the building being purchased by a commercial business owner.

Question 8 asked what new use for the building respondents thought would be best for the local town centre economy, and increase the number of visitors to Orpington High Street? Overall respondents favoured that the building should be used by community groups and retain heritage and cultural significance. This was an open-ended question and respondents were able to provide multiple answers. A summary of these ideas has been categorised and presented in the following table:

Response category	Percentage of respondents	Summary and sample comments
Community meeting/ arts centre	35%	<p>A community arts hub was favoured by the largest proportion of respondents to this question:</p> <p><i>“I envisage the Priory as an arts and heritage centre- a catalyst for reviving the old town as the cultural quarter for Orpington’s growing and increasingly diverse population, and developing the area’s appeal for visitors”</i></p> <p><i>“Art courses, painting, photography gatherings, music, history sessions, use as a place where community can learn from one another and share stories”</i></p>
Heritage/ information centre/ art gallery	31%	<p>There was a keen preference for the building to remain a museum or to be a new heritage centre. Respondents felt this would increase cultural capital to the area and attract new visitors:</p> <p><i>“The building should remain open to the public as a community and arts/heritage hub with strong physical connection to the gardens. Without a heritage offer Orpington risks being seen as a place with no community and no pride”</i></p> <p><i>“Tourist information centre, café and shop”</i></p>
Commercial	16%	<p>Some respondents had a preference towards event hire. Respondents also felt the surrounding landscape would make a good café or restaurant.</p>
Other comments	9%	<p>Other comments included:</p> <p><i>“No options. Keep it, develop it, promote it. It is Orpington’s only amenity”</i></p> <p><i>“The Priory is architecturally important and belongs to the residents of Bromley, this is a valuable asset that should not be sold off”</i></p>
Don’t know	3%	-
Council and public services	2%	<p>Comments included:</p> <p><i>“Council office with museum”</i></p>

Entertainment and leisure centre	2%	It was felt that Orpington needs an entertainment venue to cater for local people with a diverse range of interests.
Residential	1%	A couple of people expressed that the Priory should be turned into housing or specifically flats.

Question 9 asked what new use for the building respondents thought would most likely have the resources and impetus to maintain and safeguard the historic Priory building, conserving it for future generations to enjoy. A summary of these ideas has been categorised and are presented in the table below:

Response category	Percentage of respondents	Summary and sample comments
Heritage/ information centre/ art gallery	38%	<p>Preserving local history and keeping the Priory as a cultural building was a priority amongst respondents:</p> <p><i>“A refurbished museum and gallery with visitors centre”</i></p> <p><i>“The National Trust or English Heritage could turn it into a museum”</i></p>
Community meeting/ arts centre	22%	<p>It was felt that a community arts hub would be beneficial for local people and could provide education classes and room hire to provide funds:</p> <p><i>“It should become a community arts hubs-revenue could be raised from a combination of room rental, wedding venue, café, business sponsorships, grants”</i></p> <p><i>“A community minded business could create and manage adult courses, dance lessons, indoor activities for children that’s affordable for the community but at the same time raise funds required to maintain the building”.</i></p>
Commercial	13%	<p>It was argued that the historic and unique nature of the building in the area should be able to attract commercial options that are sustainable:</p> <p><i>“Commercial wedding venue”</i></p> <p><i>“Hotel and restaurant”</i></p> <p><i>“Conference centre”</i></p>
Other comments	12%	Other comments included:

		<i>"I am deeply opposed to the sale of the building by the council"</i>
Council and public services	4%	Reponses included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Registry office replacing Bromley Civic Centre venue • Other council offices
Don't know	3%	-
Entertainment and leisure centre	1%	Reponses included a centre for theatre and dance performances.