

PAPER NO 6.

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE MEETING OF 19TH OCTOBER 2015

Meeting: Executive

Date: 19th October 2015

Subject: Harborough Museum Funding 2015/16

Report of: Ann Marie Hawkins, Head of Community Wellbeing & Partnerships

Portfolio Holder: Councillor Rosita Page, Portfolio Holder for Communities

Status: For Decision

Relevant Ward(s): All

1 Purpose of the Report

1.1 To seek approval for the funding of £26k allocated to Harborough Museum for 15/16 to be utilised to deliver the activities in outlined in the Business Case in Appendix A.

2 Recommendations:

2.1 **Members approve that the funding of £26K for 2015/16, originally allocated to support the development and delivery of a Charitable Museum Trust, be utilised to deliver the activities (outlined in the Business Case in Appendix A) and re-profiled over three years (15/16, 16/17, 17/18);**

2.2 **Members authorise the Corporate Director of Community Services, in consultation with the Portfolio Holder for Communities, to agree any necessary changes to the Business Plan;**

3 Summary of Reasons for the Recommendations

The three year funding for the Harborough Museum agreed by the District Council was to support the Harborough Museum to move to an independent and sustainable charitable Museum. However, following the refurbishment of The Symington Building, the success of the new integrated Library and Museum and the challenges faced in progressing the Trust, partners agreed new partnership arrangements and a way forward. As a result of this it was agreed that work to establish a Trust at that time would cease. The newly established Harborough Museum Partnership Strategic Steering Group (made up of the three legal partners of the Museum) has agreed a Business Plan for the funding from Harborough District Council of £26K for 2015/16 (to be re-profited over 3 years to ensure better value for money and sustainability) which is attached as Appendix A.

The Business Plan reflects the initial priorities identified by partners at workshops and meetings. The Executive is therefore asked to approve the funding to deliver the activities (as identified in the Business Plan in Appendix A) to support the future development of the Museum, provide an enhanced offer, increase visitors and users of the service and attract a more diverse audience.

4 Key Facts

- 4.1 Harborough Museum is based on a partnership established in 1982 between Leicestershire County Council (LCC), Harborough District Council (HDC) and Market Harborough Historical Society (MHHS).
- 4.2 At its meeting on 26th November 2012 the Executive agreed to accept the grant funding from Market Harborough and the Bowdens Charity. A condition of this funding was that a legal agreement between the partners be put in place before the funding was released. The Partnership Agreement was entered into in June 2013 (following agreement by the Executive in March 2013). The Museum Agreement is between HDC, LCC and MHHS and is dated 20 June 2013 expiring 31 March 2087, and includes a break clause on 2 years written notice (20 June 2032) to LCC and MHHS falling 21 years from the date of the agreement, being 20 June 2034.
- 4.3 In 2011 Harborough District Council indicated the need to reduce funding to the Museum (which was a discretionary contribution) which led to the withdrawal of front of house staff in early 2013. The responsibility and cost of managing the Museum function sits with LCC. The three partners agreed to the establishment of a Trust to ensure the sustainability of Harborough Museum. In order to support the Museum to transfer to an independently and sustainably run organisation that would achieve charitable status (and could therefore potentially attract external funding) the District Council committed to providing funding over 3 years on a reducing scale. Funding agreed was £39K for 2014/15, £26K for 2015/16, £13K for 2016/17 and then zero after that

(this was subject to the Council's normal budget setting process and approval by Council for each of the financial years). Funding for 2014/15 included funding to create a website.

- 4.4 To support the transition to an independent Museum, two co-ordinators were commissioned to set up the Harborough Museum Trust via the Museum Development East Midlands (MDEM) – utilising HDC funding for 2014/15.
- 4.5 Prior to the redevelopment of The Symington Building (TSB), the Harborough Museum and Market Harborough Library were in different parts of the building. The re-development provided an opportunity to rethink these two public spaces. Following the refurbishment of the TSB the Museum and Library were co-located in an integrated, creative open plan and flexible layout. This opened to the public in April 2014 and within a few months the public reaction to the new combined space was reported as very positive.
- 4.6 As work to establish the Trust progressed and the practical detail around what the Trust could and wanted to take on, a number of significant challenges emerged:
 - Whilst much work had been done to engage new trustees, the key role of Treasurer remained vacant.
 - The Trust's business plan could not be developed until it was clear if any income streams could be transferred to the Trust. Without its own revenue the Trust would need ongoing financial support from the local authorities.
 - A lack of consensus over whether the Trust should take on responsibility for the collections.
 - The refurbishment of The Symington Building with the Museum sharing space with the Library was a fundamental change from when the original Trust model proposal was formed.

To support the Trust, LCC and HDC to jointly navigate the changed environment, Museums Development East Midlands funded and facilitated a series of workshops and meetings between November 2014 and February 2015 to help the different stakeholder organisations identify an agreed path through these tricky issues. The sessions were led by experienced external consultant and included: all Trustees; Chair of the Friends of Harborough Museum; Representatives of Market Harborough Historical Society; Relevant Officers from the County Council and Harborough District Council.

Following these sessions all parties agreed a way forward to help secure the long term future of Harborough Museum.

In summary these were to:

- Confirm the importance of the existing legal partnership between HDC, LCC and MHHS and clarify their individual roles within the partnership and affirm their ongoing commitment to the future of Harborough Museum.
- A commitment to make the partnership more effective and give equal weight to the voice of each partner, through the establishment of a partnership steering group, which would agree the strategic direction and priorities for Harborough Museum.
- A commitment to establish a programming/activity group to support the partnership in realising its vision for Harborough Museum. This group would have the ability to call on the support of other stakeholders and volunteers as appropriate.
- Agreed a series of initial priorities for Harborough Museum.
- Agreed that work to establish a Harborough Museum Trust would cease at that time and steps would be taken to resolve any outstanding issues around funding. Any funding held by the interim organisation for the benefit of the Museum be transferred to a relevant body, for the specific purpose of supporting and developing Harborough Museum.

These agreements were a significant step forward and have enabled progress to be made, albeit without the establishment of a Museum Trust at this time. It is testament to the commitment of all stakeholders to the future of the Museum that this partnership model has been developed, which makes the most of what each partner has to offer.

- 4.7 In recognition of these changes, at the Executive on 7 September 2015 Members agreed to change the wording of the Critical Outcome in the Corporate Delivery Plan for 15/16 from:

Facilitate with partners delivery of a Charitable Museum Trust for Market Harborough to:

Work with partners to support the ongoing development and sustainability of the Market Harborough Museum.

- 4.8 Work has been undertaken with partners to resolve any outstanding issues arising from ceasing work to develop a charitable trust.

- 4.9 In line with the way forward agreed above, a Harborough Museum Partnership Strategic Steering Group, comprising the three legal partners (represented by Portfolio Holders from HDC and LCC) has been established and met in June 2015 and September 2015. A draft Business Plan (for the funding agreed by HDC of £26K for 2015/16) has been agreed by the Strategic Steering Group and is attached at Appendix A. It aligns with the initial priorities identified by

partners at the workshop and meetings. The purpose of the proposal is to enhance the current offer at Harborough Museum. It aims, through improved traditional and digital promotion, to engage with the audiences, particularly school groups, young people and visitors to the area. It also aims to help to make the Museum and its collections and resources accessible, sustainable and diverse through a well managed programme of activities. The funding has been suggested to be re-profiled over 3 years by Harborough District Council's Portfolio Holder to provide better value for money and sustainability and partners are fully supportive of this.

- 4.10 As the District Council's funding for the Museum of £26K for 2015/16 was originally agreed to support the Museum Trust to move to an independent and sustainable charitable organisation Executive approval is sought for this funding to be utilised to deliver the activities as set out in the Business Case in Appendix A.

5 Legal Issues

- 5.1 A legal Partnership Agreement was entered into in June 2013 (following Executive approval in March 2013) between Harborough District Council, Leicestershire County Council and Market Harborough Historical Society. This was a condition of the funding received by Market Harborough and Bowden's Charity.

6 Resource Issues

- 6.1 The £26K for the Harborough Museum for 2015/16 was approved by Council for 2015/16.
- 6.2 Harborough District Council also provides significant in kind financial support to the Harborough Museum by the provision of accommodation at the Council's cost (estimated at 61k).

7 Equality Analysis Implications/Outcomes

- 7.1 The proposals in the Business Case directly aim to attract a more diverse audience for the Museum and ensure that communities in the District can benefit from the services provided.

8. Risk Management Implications

- 8.1 Risks and mitigations in relation to the delivery Business Plan are highlighted in the Business Plan.

9 Consultation

9.1 The priorities identified in the Business Case are based on consultation and meetings with partners and agreement by the Harborough Museum's three legal partners.

10. Options

10.1 Proposals in the Business Case arise out of discussions and Options considered by partners and aim to be completed by March 2018, after which the aim is that the activities are sustainable through core budget, increased (self generated) income, volunteering and community engagement.

11. Background Papers

11.1 Harborough Museum Partnership Agreement and Future Operational Model report to Executive 25 March 2015.

Previous report(s):

Information Issued Under Sensitive Issue Procedure: Y/N

Ward Members Notified: N/A

Appendices:

A. Business Case: Harborough Museum