



# Buckinghamshire County Council

## Report

Cabinet Member for  
Community Services

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<b>Date:</b>	<b>23 March 2001</b>	<b>Decision to be taken on or after: 30 March 2001</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>Museum Entry Charges</b>	<b>CM Decision No: CS4/01</b>
<b>Author</b>	<b>Head of Museum Service</b>	
<b>Electoral Divisions Affected</b>	All	
<b>Summary</b>	Admission charges to museums are seen as a barrier to access and national policy is working towards the reduction and eventual removal of charges to national museums. Removal of admission charges to the County Museum is seen as a key element in a strategy to increase visitors to the Museum. Loss of income from admission charges is expected to be made up from increased spend from increased visitor numbers. Any shortfall will be met from existing budgets.	
<b>Recommendation</b>	That admission charges to the main County Museum be removed from September 2001.	

### Background

An admission charge for adults (currently £1.50) was introduced at the County Museum in April 1998 as an additional means of income generation at a time when a significant cut was made to the Museum's revenue budget. Free admission for children continued, as this is a condition of the County's agreement with the Bucks Archaeological Society. Agreement was reached with the Bucks Archaeological Society and the Museum Friends and Patrons for both organisations to make an annual block contribution to the Museum based on their total membership which gave their members free admission to the main Museum.

Currently, the income raised from Museum only admission charges (i.e. excluding Dahl admissions) is c. £10,000 per annum, of which c. £5,000 comes from the BAS and Friends contributions.

### **The National Picture**

Government policy since May 1997 has been to work towards the progressive reduction and eventual removal of admission charges to national museums and galleries where these had been introduced in recent years. The intention was that the museums in question would be compensated for the loss of income by receiving higher government funding, and that the reduced cost or free admission would increase access to museums for disadvantaged or socially excluded groups in society. So far, free admission for children has been introduced and a flat rate £1 admission for adults is planned for introduction in September 2001. The policy was further developed in the March 2001 budget when the Chancellor announced a new scheme that will refund national museums and galleries the VAT they incur on their purchases when they allow the public free admission, thereby removing this barrier to free entry. Eligible museums and galleries that do not currently charge will be able to reclaim the VAT they incur from 1 April 2001.

Although this initiative only directly affects national government funded museums, it inevitably affects visitors' perceptions of local museums and the value for money they offer. The nearest government funded museum to Aylesbury is the Zoological Museum at Tring which attracted 38,000 visitors in 1999/2000 and will now be offering free admission for children and adult admission down from £3.50 to £1.00 from September 2001.

### **Future Admission policy for the County Museum**

Having an admission charge for the main County Museum is a barrier to access, and it is appropriate to consider whether it should be removed as part of a strategy to increase Museum visitor numbers, which are declining.

A number of marketing initiatives are already in hand which promote free access to the Museum for targeted groups. These include a current offer to all new County Library joiners of a free family admission to the main Museum, and three special Family Learning days at the Museum. Removing the charge to the main Museum is a logical extension to these initiatives and an essential action in a strategy designed to increase visitor numbers. It is expected to make up the loss of revenue from removing the admission charge by generating extra income from the increased spend at the Museum shop and cafe that the anticipated increase in visitors will bring. Any shortfall will be met from the LIMA budget.

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### **Decision Taken:**

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ (General Manager/Head of Service)

in consultation with \_\_\_\_\_ (Cabinet Member)

Date:

## **Representations**

Any representations regarding this proposed decision should be made to Head of Cabinet Support by 5.00 pm on Thursday 29 March 2001. This can be done by telephone (to 01296 382966), Fax (to 01296 383441), or e-mail to [cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk](mailto:cabinet@buckscc.gov.uk)

For further information please contact Oliver Green on 01296 331441

