



Buckinghamshire County Council Select Committee

Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

Report to the Transport, Environment and Communities Select Committee

Title: Update	Buckinghamshire County Museum Trust
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Purpose of Agenda Item

This report is to provide an update on the first 2 years' operation of the Bucks County Museum Trust, which delivers the county museum service on behalf of BCC.

Background

The Buckinghamshire County Museum attracts around 90,000 visitors and provides educational visits to 14,000 school children each year. The Resource Centre in Halton is home to the 150 year old museum collection containing 130,000 objects which represent the heritage of the county. It works in partnership with Bucks Archaeological Society which owns the Church Street site in Aylesbury and owns the museum collections pre 1957. The museum is accredited through Arts Council England. The other key partners are the Museum Friends and Patrons who support collections acquisition and conservation and volunteer across both Museum sites. The Patrons also support major exhibitions in the Art Gallery.

The Grade 2* Church Street Museum Site and the pre-1957 collections are owned by the Bucks Archaeological Society and leased to BCC at peppercorn rent for 125 years with the legal conditions placed on BCC that the building is maintained and the collections are cared for to museum accreditation standards.

The Museum provides the people of Buckinghamshire and visitors to the County with unique opportunities for learning, inspiration and enjoyment. It achieves this by acquiring, preserving, displaying, interpreting and making accessible museum collections and



associated material that represent the County's natural and cultural heritage. The Museum contributes to the quality of life in Bucks by safeguarding and presenting the Museum collections and information resources. It promotes the economic wellbeing of the County as one of its leading visitor attractions and it has an important lifelong learning role for people from all sections of the community.

The museum is a valued but a non-statutory service and the budget challenges presented through the MTP process necessitated a review of how it operated and the potential of alternative operating models. The Bucks County Museum Trust was established as a company limited by guarantee with exclusively charitable objects: this model provides a fit for purpose, tax efficient and flexible structure suited to expansion, diversification and collaboration. A wholly owned subsidiary trading company has also been registered at Companies House to ensure proper regard to the charitable objects of the Trust. The transfer of operations to the new Buckinghamshire Museum Trust took place on August 1st 2014. Dr Bob Sutcliffe has been appointed as Chair of the Trust and a further five trustees have been appointed including Cllr Bill Chapple as the BCC trustee. The skills base and experience of the trustees is wide and covers finance, HR, marketing, heritage, local government and the charitable sector.

Summary

A number of alternative delivery vehicles have been adopted by various services across BCC, and there have been concerns over the performance of some of these. The purpose of this report is to give a balanced view of the performance of 'spin outs' and to highlight the ongoing success of the Bucks County Museum Trust.

Benefits and achievements:

- a) Charitable status brings a number of financial benefits. Charitable rates relief obtained of 100% at Missenden Store, 90% at Halton MRC and 85% at Church St. Each year this saves around £48,000. The public purchase of Roald Dahl Children's Gallery tickets is eligible for gift aid – in first full year of trading, this realised extra income of £6500.
- b) The Trust has a range of other fundraising possibilities e.g. membership scheme, legacy funding, more association between the public and a charity for philanthropic purposes than BCC, and commercial partnerships/sponsorships. Some examples include: Wilkins Solicitors, Lucas Fettes insurance Brokers and Axa Art
- c) The opportunity for different staffing options and terms and conditions. The employers contribution to the LGPS is lower because of the small size of the business unit and ages profile of staff and new staff are employed outside the LGPS at a considerable saving

- d) Bringing in a different set of skills and expertise from the charitable and business communities to bring about cultural change and develop new business.
- e) Identified cumulative savings for BCC of over £300k over the first 4 years of operation.
- f) A more cost effective and sustainable delivery model moving forward.
- g) Development of additional SLAs to generate additional income: The Embroiderers Guild Trustees have now deposited their collections with the BCMT and are relocating their offices to attic space at Church Street premises. The National Paralympic Heritage Trust have agreed an SLA for collections care and development.

The relationship between BCC and the Bucks County Museum Trust is very open and regular review meetings are held at 2 levels: quarterly service review meetings between Contract Manager and Museum Director and twice-yearly Executive Committee meetings which also include Chair of Museum Trust, Cabinet Member for Community Engagement and Communities Service Director. One of these meetings each year is the formal annual review of performance.

Key issues

The contract term is 20 years and the management fee is negotiated in 5 year periods. The management fee for the second five year period is to be negotiated later this year.

Resource implications

Performance against original business case:

BCC contribution	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18
Planned	435k + 26k <i>transition funding</i>	420k + 10k <i>transition funding</i>	400k	400k
Actual	448k + 26k <i>transition funding</i>	435k + 10k <i>transition funding</i>		

BCC savings	38k	53k	86k	131k
BCC pressure*	13k	15k	15k	15k

**due to incorrect assumptions in the original business case about obtaining 100% charitable rates relief on all properties and the salary uplift awarded to staff in July 2014 which BCC agreed to honour for the first period's funding.*

In the last financial year, the BCMT had total incoming funds of £820k, of which £697k was unrestricted. Total funds carried forward were £92k, of which £31k was unrestricted. The restricted funds are reserved for Arts Council grants for activity to be completed in the 16/17 financial year and acquisitions to the BCC collection.

Future Opportunities and Challenges

Opportunities

- Complete application to Heritage Lottery Fund for rebid to redevelop the museum site in Aylesbury.
- Build on the Volunteering initiatives to embed in museum operations for the future.
- Diversification of income through new commercial partnerships, corporate membership schemes and profitable museum stores visits.
- Build on the experience of engaging productively with Muslim population of Bucks.
- Build on the new SLAs concluded with the Embroiderers Guild and McDowall collections, and currently being negotiated with the National Paralympic Heritage Trust.

Challenges

- Revenue costs need to be further controlled.
- Need to increase the number and profitability of schools visits, improve retail and catering income, as well as identifying possible new revenue streams.
- Complete areas for improvement identified in accreditation approval in 2014 and reviewed in 2016.
- Complete installations for first phase of environmental improvements at Halton museum store.
- Replace income to be lost following the end (after 20 years) of the SLA with Milton Keynes Council for care of collections.