

## **Cabinet**

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**Date of Meeting:** 10 April 2018

**Report Title:** West Park Museum; Future Accommodation of Collections

**Portfolio Holder:** Cllr Don Stockton, Portfolio Holder Environment

**Senior Officer:** Frank Jordan Executive Director Place

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### **1. Report Summary**

- 1.1. The purpose of this report is to seek approval for a project to safeguard the future of West Park Museum and its collections.
- 1.2. This paper summarises the current position and presents a recommendation based on an options appraisal undertaken in December 2017. Appendix A provides further background information.
- 1.3. This is in line with the Cheshire East Council's Corporate Plan and in particular Corporate Objectives 2 – Cheshire East has a strong and resilient economy, Objective 3 – People have the life skills and education they need in order to thrive and Outcome 5 – People live well and for longer.

### **2. Recommendation/s**

#### **2.1. That Cabinet:**

- 2.1.1. Endorse the option to retain the collection within the museum building at West Park and to refurbish the Museum to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- 2.1.2. Note the potential for interim and remedial works, including the temporary relocation, or storage of the collection, during the period until museum refurbishment is complete.

### **3. Reasons for Recommendation/s**

- 3.1. Based on the options appraisal (Appendix A), refurbishment of the West Park Museum and retention of collections within the Park (option 1 in the options appraisal) is recommended for approval. This is based on the fact that it is the only option that does not require investment in two buildings and that this option has the potential to attract external funding. The option also retains the integrity of the heritage offer in the wider context of the Park.
- 3.2. The recommended option would still require temporary relocation or storage of the collection, which (subject to negotiation with the Silk Heritage Trust) could be at a Silk Heritage Trust facility, so retaining access in Macclesfield.

Should the Silk Heritage Trust decide that they are unable to house the collection on a temporary basis, other temporary storage options will be investigated.

3.3. Discussions with the Heritage Lottery Fund have ascertained that a broader strategic approach to redevelopment of West Park and Cemetery, including the Museum would be welcomed by them.

#### **4. Other Options Considered**

4.1. The options appraisal (Appendix A) considered three options. Each of the options under consideration carries with it a number of pros and cons as well as inter-related dependencies and impacts. A decision on the future of the museum and the collection is a complex issue which requires all implications to be considered. For this reason the analysis of each of the options is supported by a SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, attached at Appendix B.

4.2. The options that have been considered are:

- Option 1: Retention of the collection within the museum building at West Park including temporary relocation whilst refurbishment works are carried out on the museum building to ensure it is fit for purpose.
- Option 2: Permanent relocation of the collection to the Old Sunday School
- Option 3: Permanent relocation of the collection to the Silk Museum

4.3. In addition a fourth option of 'do nothing' was also considered and dismissed. This is owing to the curatorial and reputational responsibilities of the Council, the liability for the listed building, the potential loss of cultural value and the 'opportunity cost' of being able to improve access to the collection.

4.4. It should be noted that both options 2 and 3 would still require an alternative plan and resources to repurpose the museum building in West Park.

#### **5. Background**

5.1. West Park Museum was donated to the people of Macclesfield by Marianne Brocklehurst (1832-1898) and her brother Peter Pownall Brocklehurst (1821-1903). The object of the benefactors was: *to found a museum to be furnished with a collection of works of Art, Geological specimens Egyptian and other Oriental curios with the view of affording educational advantages and instructive recreation to the people of Macclesfield*. This was accompanied by specific arrangements for the design and layout of the building.

5.2. Professional curatorial advice has been received stating that West Park Museum is no longer fit for purpose. This is particularly in relation to the Museum's environmental conditions, which are not suitable and even damaging to the collections, and also to the lack of sanitary and educational facilities to accommodate school groups. The environment within West Park Museum has been gradually deteriorating for a number of years due to the physical condition of the building. The high level of humidity in the building and the age of the heating system, mean that the environment for the display of important collections is inadequate and will cause them to deteriorate in the future. Particularly sensitive material has already been removed from display and the museum is precluded from borrowing material from elsewhere to enhance the collection. Further details of the building and environmental conditions are included in Appendix A.

5.3. The following actions have since been taken in agreement with the Silk Heritage Trust and the Portfolio Holder:

- Vulnerable items have been identified and moved to either the Old Sunday School or Silk Museum for temporary period.
- New displays have been opened to the public at Old Sunday School and Silk Museum.
- The remaining displays at West Park Museum have been adjusted to minimise impact.
- A Communications plan has been agreed with the Silk Heritage Trust to inform the public about the options; either to retain the collection at West Park Museum or to relocate it to another town centre location.

5.4. The options appraisal which has been conducted by independent specialist consultants (Purcell) recommends that refurbishment of the building should be undertaken.

5.5. The refurbishment of the Museum building will include installation of appropriate heating and environmental control systems, a small extension to provide for sanitary and cloakroom facilities and a more flexible space for education sessions. It will also allow for a complete redisplay of the collections making more sense of the story behind them and how it relates to Macclesfield.

5.6. In order to achieve the recommendation, a strategic plan will be developed which looks holistically at all three areas; the Park, the Museum and the Cemetery. A longer term approach to the Museum, Park and Cemetery together may open up additional opportunities for use of the building that would enhance the visitor offer, providing benefit to visitors to both the Park and the Museum. Financial implications of this are included in the Finance section.

5.7. Submission of an expression of interest to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a project to restore both West Park and Macclesfield Cemetery has been held in abeyance while awaiting the options appraisal on the museum and its collections.

5.8. In line with the Council's Parks Strategy, a Parks development Fund has been established which could in part, now be used to support the development of an overall strategic plan for the Park, Museum and Cemetery and development related funding bids.

## **6. Implications of the Recommendations**

### **6.1. Legal Implications**

6.1.1. There are no specific current legal issues in relation to the museum which arise from the matters set out within this report, other than those relating to a listed building and possible temporary arrangements with the Silk Heritage Trust.

6.1.2. If the recommended option is not approved, and rather option 2 or option 3 was selected this would have implications for the future use or disposal of the building and then legal advice would be sought at the relevant time.

6.1.3. Legal advice will also be sought in relation to the terms of any grant funding and in relation to the procurement of the works in due course.

### **6.2. Finance Implications**

6.2.1. It is proposed that this scheme would be funded from capital funding included on the Addendum to the capital programme under the investment in Heritage Assets line. This is subject to affordability and will require a business case to be submitted to the Portfolio Holder for Finance and Communications and the Interim Executive Director of Corporate Services (Section 151 Officer) to seek the additional approval required in order for the scheme to be transferred to the main capital programme.

6.2.2. All options all would require capital investment. The likely scale of that requirement has been assessed in the options appraisal as follows:

## Option Costs

- 6.2.3. **Option 1** is the recommended option. This is estimated to cost £675K plus £50K for temporary relocation / storage and redisplay of the collection during refurbishment
- 6.2.4. **Option 2** is not being recommended by Purcells and so no refurbishment costs are given. This option would still require re-use of the museum building at c£425k to £900k depending on use.
- 6.2.5. **Option 3** would cost between £1.8m to £2.3m for building refurbishment, of which at least £192k would be specifically required for the gallery representation. This option would still require re-use of the museum building at c£425k to £900k depending on use.
- 6.2.6. While all options would require capital investment, options 2 and 3 would not only require investment in the redisplay of the collections and potentially in the buildings where the collections would be re-sited, but would also require capital investment in the repair and re-purposing of the West park museum building.
- 6.2.7. The degree to which capital investment would be required to allow redisplay in one of the Silk Heritage Buildings would depend on whether a temporary (while West park museum is refurbished) or a permanent solution was sought. This would need further discussion or negotiation with the Silk Heritage Trust.
- 6.2.8. There is potential to draw down grant funding, although to secure this, the future use of the museum building will need to be considered in the context of the park and cemetery plans, which relies upon use of the Parks Development fund to address this aspect and all related funding application.
- 6.2.9. Heritage buildings in parks are eligible for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund grant programmes. HLF have confirmed that parks will remain a priority for them as part of 'place shaping'. Heritage buildings, redisplay of collections and new interpretation are eligible under HLF Heritage Grants. Other grants (such as the Arts Council and Trusts/foundations) could be explored. The Executive Director, Place will submit all appropriate expressions of interest and funding applications to secure funding for this project.
- 6.2.10. It is not possible to generate a full funding strategy until project funding is available to develop an overall Park plan to include the Museum. The preparation of project plans and grant applications would

in itself require a funding commitment which could be treated as part of a capital project if approved. For guidance, based on comparable projects this is likely to be in the order of £60,000. This will be funded through the Parks Development Fund to prepare external funding applications, including the development of a strategic plan for the redevelopment of the Museum, Park and Cemetery at West Park. This currently has a capital budget of £277k in the main capital programme.

6.2.11. For the recommended option there will be a need to recognise the costs of rehousing and managing the collections on a temporary basis in a revised Service Level Agreement with the Silk Heritage Trust. This would specifically need to address the ongoing management, care and access to the collections during the development and implementation of the project. The future management costs will be determined as part of business case development.

6.2.12. To ensure the conservation of and continuing access to the collection while the options appraisal was progressed, the Council has already committed £13,150 from the Cultural Economy budget, for the temporary relocation and redisplay of vulnerable items. There is likely to be an ongoing requirement for interim remedial actions to secure conservation of and access to the collection until a refurbishment project is completed. This is likely to necessitate further unplanned expenditure.

### **6.3. Equality Implications**

6.3.1. An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out and finds there are no negative implications on equality.

### **6.4. Human Resources Implications**

6.4.1. There are no direct implications on Human Resources.

### **6.5. Risk Management Implications**

6.5.1. Premises and operational costs will remain, post restoration and redisplay.

6.5.2. Although visitor numbers could be improved, these are unlikely ever to be above 8,000-10,000.

6.5.3. Changes to HLF programmes increases competition for reducing resources.

6.5.4. Management of the Museum is currently delivered through the Silk Heritage Trust through a service level agreement (SLA) that includes West Park Museum. Until the project is fully developed it is not possible

to ascertain the full running costs, although it may be anticipated that future management costs may be higher than the current position, whichever option is agreed.

6.5.5. The Silk Heritage Trust provides an accredited museum service for all the Macclesfield museums including West Park. Without accreditation no museum can gain access to funding from Arts Council, Heritage Lottery Fund and other funding bodies.

6.5.6. The Silk Heritage Trust have stated that retaining the collection in West Park is likely to prevent them from achieving financial sustainability in accordance with their future business plans. Whilst this could result in a reduction in annual funding to the Trust, the costs of putting in place appropriate museum management and conservation resource by the Council would be greater than any savings made by reducing the grant. The Council does not currently operate a museums service that could take on this operational requirement, maintain accreditation or provide the expertise necessary to care for the collections.

#### **6.6. Rural Communities Implications**

6.6.1. There are no direct implications for rural communities.

#### **6.7. Implications for Children & Young People**

6.7.1. Approval of this recommendation will enhance facilities for schools groups and provision of education, so benefitting children and young people.

#### **6.8. Public Health Implications**

6.8.1. There are no direct implications for public health.

### **7. Ward Members Affected**

7.1. All Macclesfield wards. Ward members have not yet been notified. A briefing will take place prior to a Cabinet decision.

### **8. Consultation & Engagement**

8.1. Public consultation will take place on the strategic plan for the development of the Park, Museum and Cemetery as a whole. In addition, a Friends of West Park community group is being developed who will feed into the process.

8.2. Stakeholders are being updated on a regular basis.

## **9. Access to Information**

**The following background documents have been used to prepare this report.**

West Park Museum Feasibility Study – Purcell March 2017

West Park Museum Options Appraisal – Purcell January 2018

West Park and Cemetery Outline Options – Purcell December 2016

Equality Impact Assessment

## **10. Contact Information**

10.1. Any questions relating to this report should be directed to the following officer:

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