

SUBJECT: Tourism, Leisure, Culture and Youth – Museum Service Interim Reduction in Opening Hours

MEETING: Individual Cabinet Member Decision

DATE: 8th May 2019

DIVISION/WARDS AFFECTED: Not Applicable

1. PURPOSE:

- 1.1 To approve an interim reduction in the opening hours at Abergavenny, Chepstow and Monmouth Museum. This will close the museums to the public on Wednesday every week pending a full review of service provision.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 2.1 To agree the interim changes to the opening hours.

3. KEY ISSUES:

- 3.1 Previous assessments of the museum service has shown that there is a very high level of commitment and passion from the staff who work there and there is evidence of some very good practice in terms of collections management and the service which is being offered to residents and visitors.
- 3.2 Since significant redesign of service in 2014-15, and smaller scale savings subsequently, the service has struggled annually to provide a balanced budget position, commonly incurring a deficit of £40k-£50k per annum despite its commitment to service delivery including the introduction of single manning at all 3 sites. As part of the MonLife assessment, the past staffing saving was reversed in 2019-20 to provide circa £26k benefit per annum, but the reduced opening hours is designed to further alleviate operational pressures.
- 3.3 The Service includes both managing the overall collection; and the day to day operation and opening of the sites to the public. Both elements of the service will need to be reviewed in order to identify options for future delivery and ensure that these services remain sustainable for the longer term.
- 3.4 Currently limited staffing at sites restricts Custodians abilities to offer a full front of house service as they have to maintain the front desk and shop, deal with visitors requesting historic information, undertake administrative tasks, such as banking, ordering, restocking and health and safety issues, as well as assist with the rotation and updating of displays.

- 3.5 Tourism, Leisure, Culture and Youth Service also provide other visitor attractions which are open to the public; Caldicot Castle and Country Park, Shire Hall, Tintern Old Station and Chepstow TIC. There is potential to now look across these services in conjunction with the museum offer with a view to reduce any duplication of administrative and other tasks which may release staff to deal with customers and potentially increase income by offering a better retail product. A review will now be undertaken, with results presented in a report to the Economy and Development Select Committee later in 2019 with a series of recommendations for future service provision for Museums and Attractions.
- 3.6 Pending the outcome of this review, there is a need to ensure that we can continue to provide access to our sites whilst maintaining an adequate service. The museums at Abergavenny and Monmouth have closed on Wednesday and it is proposed that Chepstow now close as well. This will allow work to be undertaken on the review which will examine the professional museum service and the protection of collections whilst maintaining access to the museums for residents and visitors. At this stage there is no impact on staff as they will continue to work within the service to provide much needed support to the professional service.

4. EQUALITY AND FUTURE GENERATIONS EVALUATION (INCLUDES SOCIAL JUSTICE, SAFEGUARDING AND CORPORATE PARENTING):

- 4.1 The work of the Museum Service holds the wellbeing of our Future Generations at its very heart. It is well documented that participation in cultural life improves people's wellbeing and this is something considered throughout the service's work. Whilst reducing the period of opening restricts public access, the additional time will allow staff to focus on long term improvements to service provision and allow for a properly considered review to prioritise the needs of the service and ensure the best possible resources are put in place to address them.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

- 5.1 The one day site closures would enable Custodians to undertake support for the professional service and provide much needed time to undertake basic administrative functions. There is no other way to currently provide this support whilst maintaining a front of house presence without incurring additional costs.
- 5.2 Wednesday was considered as the best day to close the museums to the public because they attracted fewer visitors on that day so the impact on residents and visitors would not be as significant. This closure will allow the service review to be undertaken with as little service disruption as possible and restricting costs to within the existing budget.

6. EVALUATION CRITERIA

- 6.1 This will be evaluated once the review of the Museum and Attractions Service has been undertaken and recommendations made to Economy and Development Select Committee. The service will be redesigned to ensure that it can be delivered within the existing budget whilst maintaining front line provision

7. REASONS:

- 7.1 The reduction in hours is necessary to release staff resources to undertake support to the professional service in order for the Service Managers to undertake a service review which identifies the Strategy for Service Delivery and makes recommendations to Members regarding future service delivery options.

8. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 8.1 There are no significant resource implications from the closure of the museum sites on a Wednesday. Staff costs will remain the same as staff will support the professional team with work around the maintenance of the existing collection. Data has indicated that shop sales on Wednesday are limited (Based on sales for Wednesdays in 2018/19 there is potential for a net loss of income of £1,150. It is anticipated that this can be found within existing service budgets whilst the review is being carried out.

9. CONSULTEES:

Enterprise DMT
Cabinet member for TLCY
Head of TLCY
TLCY Management Team
Museum Staff

10. BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Appendix 1: Equality and Future Generations Evaluation

11. AUTHORS & CONTACT DETAILS:

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