

Report to: Museums Committee

Date of Meeting: 25 June 2018

Report Title: Resilience project update

Report By: Cathy Walling
Museum Curator

Purpose of Report

This report summarises the findings and recommendations so far of the second Museum Resilience project

Recommendation(s)

- 1. that the Committee accepts the report and are satisfied with the comments in the report**

Reasons for Recommendations

Introduction

1. The Museum was successful in an application to the ACE Museum Resilience Fund and was awarded £85,000 for a project to be delivered in the period 1 October 2016 to 31 March 2018.
2. Finding our Place 2 focussed on four main areas for improvement identified in the stage 1 review:
 - Improving visibility of the Museum through marketing and promotion
 - Audience Development and engagement
 - Collections review to ensure effective working practices
 - Business and project development expertise
3. The project has now been completed, and the following report provides an update into progress in each of the areas detailed above. All plans and strategies exist in draft form pending the appointment to the Museum and Cultural Services Manager post.

Marketing, visibility and audience engagement

4. The marketing objectives at HMAG are:
 - Increase the profile of HMAG locally amongst the target audiences
 - Develop a deeper understanding of HMAG audiences and non-visitors
 - Position HMAG as welcoming place for local people

These flow directly from HMAG's two of strategic aims relating to marketing:

- Strategic Aim 1: Promote and establish a shared vision and values for the museum. To grow the museum's profile both within the local authority and the sub-regional cultural and community development sector.
 - Strategic Aim 3: Increase the museum's visitor base through a deeper understanding of its audience and non-users.
5. Based on the marketing audit and visitor research, the marketing actions are recommended to:
 - meet the museum's marketing objectives
 - address some of the barriers to visiting
 - create more opportunities to communicate the key messages
 - encourage first time visitors
 - encourage repeat visitors.

6. The actions have been developed so as to be realistic and deliverable within the HMAG's limited resources. There will not be a step change in marketing or visitor numbers unless a dedicated marketing resource is available to the museum.

Collections Review

7. The Collections Review pilot was completed and a total of 635 First World War items have been catalogued, photographed and reviewed for significance. This pilot area was selected to complement Hastings Remembers, an HLF funded project commemorating WW1. A framework has been provided for staff to assess collections when completing the Collections Review process. The framework is a step by step guide to the documentation, handling, labelling, and photographic processes needed to complete and record the review, along with an explanation of the significance criteria to be used in assessing objects. This document will sit alongside Hastings Museum and Art Gallery (HMAG)'s Documentation Manual. It has been written with reference to the SPECTRUM 5.0 standard consultation draft procedures, and will be amended following any changes to these drafts.

8. The social history collections were identified as the next area to be reviewed. The documentation intern will continue to work on this aspect of the collection review until the end of July 2018. Progress has been made in tackling the documentation backlog.

9. Culture Shift facilitated a public consultation event in November 2017, entitled 'Inside Out: What Goes on in the Museum?' 30+ people attended the consultation event; 22 people filled in the online survey; 86 people filled in a young people's online survey, designed and promoted by one of the Young Curators. Visitors enjoyed greatly the access to a random collection from the store. The display generated wide ranging conversations which touched on the objects, their history and their provenance. Visitors connected through this very tangibly with the objects and the role of the museum.

10. Museum staff have worked with a range of experts to produce significance statements for parts of the collections. Those completed are for the Native North American, Brasseley, Geology and Hastings Rarities collections. Others will follow for the Burton and Tressell collections.

Business Planning and Income Generation

11. The Business Development and Action Plan provides a working document detailing how HMAG can immediately put in place a way of working that will enable them to both achieve their strategic objectives and need for financial security.

12. The executive summary states that Hastings Museum & Art Gallery (HMAG) has much to be proud of and has achieved a great deal throughout the museum's history. The work completed during 2017-18 to produce the Finding Our Place: A new vision for Hastings Museum & Art Gallery has demonstrated that there is now strong sense of vision, mission and values and these are integral to everything that the museum does. However increased competition for public funding has led to increased pressure for museums to become less reliant on public funding. This can only be achieved if the museum can attract visitors that will provide an income stream.

13. The Business Plan sets out how HMAG can deliver its services and achieve its aims between 2018 and 2021. There are five strategic aims at the heart of the business and development plan which are all designed to stretch and challenge HMAG to achieve more for their audiences through collaboration with their partners and stakeholders as well as increase the income through trading, room hire, additional events and activities. By investing in its future and building its capacity HMAG will be able to develop and seize new and exciting opportunities.

14. The team is committed to diversifying income streams at the museum, while also lobbying for the local and regional recognition and support that the museum deserves. The staff and wider team at Hastings BC are committed to ensuring that the museum is ambitious, confident and effective enough to make the most of the exciting opportunities and to deliver all the aims in this plan.

15. There are challenges in delivering everything set out in this plan; therefore a set of targets and action plan has been developed alongside this as well as a Fundraising Strategy to set out how HMAG can resource the activities outlined and achieve the aims and objectives detailed. The financial forecast for the coming three years, and the risks associated with the development plan have also been outlined to ensure the plan is current. This should constitute a working document that can be updated and modified as changes are made and implemented.

16. This plan represents an opportunity for HMAG to:

- build and maintain close relationships with existing funders
- develop and build the museum shop as a successful independent gift shop with appropriate links to the museum's collections and stories
- maximise existing resources to secure as much income as possible from venue hire
- increase commercial income from café and bar sales
- become more proactive in selling spaces and services to clients and focusing on the events and bookings that achieve the most income for the museum; to submit grant applications for a range of activities and to focus on different ways of securing income from private and company sponsorships.

Hastings & St Leonards Museum Association

17. A key facet of the museum's operating context is the Hastings & St Leonards Museum Association, the organisation which instituted the museum and now plays a significant role in its governance and fundraising. Therefore any strategic planning for the museum as a whole needs to reflect the current activities of the association and consider the role it could potentially play in the future development of the museum.

18. The Hastings Museum Association are clearly very committed to their representational role on the Museum Committee, strong advocates for the museum

and dedicated to fundraising through social activity and some collaborative programming with the HMAG team at the museum site itself.

19. The Association Committee recognise that they need to increase their profile to ensure that new members are attracted to the association, that the organisation itself needs strengthening, that a fundraising campaign would potentially provide a strong focus and drive and that working in partnership may yield a range of benefits.

20. To this end, a short term action plan has been devised to help start address some of these issues and set development in the right direction. There is potential for this initial work to be built upon over successive years, so that the association grows gradually, over the medium term. Given the current position, this process is likely to be more effective if targeted external support and capacity building were available.

21. In summary it appears that at this point in time, the committee neither have the appetite nor the capacity for major change and development. It would not be suitable for the Association to adopt broader and more diverse programming and fundraising tasks as there would need to be some more fundamental changes for this to occur.

Volunteer Management

22. Arts Council England gave a small grant of £5,000 to do some preliminary investigations into a Volunteer Development Programme, as a bolt-on to the Resilience 2 work. We have been working with consultant Maggie Piazza as a 'critical friend', examining approaches, policies and examples of good practice, including visits to other museums where volunteering programmes are particularly successful. We will submit our progress report to ACE shortly and aim to complete our own framework and policies by the end of August.

Summary

23. Underlying the Resilience Project is an ambitious vision for the Museum, articulated in the draft Forward Plan as;

"HMAG is a museum that is creative, excellent, relevant, visible and viable for the people of Hastings and beyond."

This cannot be achieved solely through efficiencies and short term actions, and the report highlights the need for more significant development in the medium term.

24. Although the Resilience Project is now complete, the recommended actions, targets and future objectives need to be linked together to form the next Forward Plan for the period 2018-2022. This will be based based on the vision, values and strategic objectives of the Resilience work achieved since 2015 with the support of Arts Council England.

Wards Affected

Ashdown, Baird, Braybrooke, Castle, Central St. Leonards, Conquest, Gensing, Hollington, Maze Hill, Old Hastings, Ore, Silverhill, St. Helens, Tressell, West St. Leonards, Wishing Tree

Policy Implications

Please identify if this report contains any implications for the following:

Equalities and Community Cohesiveness	No
Crime and Fear of Crime (Section 17)	No
Risk Management	No
Environmental Issues	No
Economic/Financial Implications	No
Human Rights Act	No
Organisational Consequences	No
Local People's Views	No
Anti-Poverty	No

Additional Information

Officer to Contact

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