

Report to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services

Report submitted by: Head of Libraries, Museums, Culture & Registrars Service

Date – 30th March 2017

Part I

Electoral Division affected:
Fleetwood East;

Fleetwood Maritime Museum - interim opening arrangements

Contact for further information:

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Executive Summary

Fleetwood Museum Trust wishes to re-open the Museum to benefit from the visitors that will be attracted to the Museum over Easter and have requested that LCC re-open the Museum from 1 April 2017 (with the Trust's volunteers on duty) in advance of the formal transfer date being agreed.

Recommendation

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services are asked to approve the re-opening of Fleetwood Maritime Museum from 1 April 2017 in conjunction with the Fleetwood Museum Trust and remain open until the formal transfer to the Fleetwood Museum Trust.

This decision should be implemented immediately for the purposes of Standing Order 34(3) as any delay could adversely affect the execution of the County Council's responsibilities. The reason for this is to ensure that the Museum is open in time for the peak holiday period over Easter.

Background and Advice

Following the budget decisions taken by the Council in February 2016, Fleetwood Maritime Museum was one of five museums identified for closure on 31 March 2016. In the interests of allowing more time to find alternative operators for the museums, it was agreed that the museums would remain open to the public until 30 September 2016.

During this period, an application process was undertaken to identify potential future museum operators. Fleetwood Museum Trust was identified as the preferred applicant for Fleetwood Maritime Museum and this was confirmed by a decision taken by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning and Cultural Services on 23 August 2016.

Since that time, negotiations have been underway and a set of legal agreements are almost completed.

However, the Trust has asked that the Council re-opens the Museum from 1 April 2017 to enable the Museum to attract visitors over April and especially the peak Easter holiday period.

The Council still has the Fleetwood Museum Manager in post to carry out the "care and maintenance regime" that has been in place since 30 September 2016. As the Trust's volunteers had provided front-of-house support to the Museum whilst it was open, they have agreed to do so again.

Therefore, the Council could re-open the Museum from 1 April and manage the Museum until the date of the formal transfer from the Council to the Trust, which should be no later than 1 June 2017.

When the formal transfer date is reached, the Museum will remain open under the auspices of the Trust.

Consultations

The Trust raised this request at a meeting with Council officers on 7 March 2017 and confirmed in an email from the Trust on 22 March 2017.

Implications:

This item has the following implications, as indicated:

Financial – the County Council has continued to be responsible for heating and lighting the Museum to maintain the "care and maintenance regime" since it closed on 30 September and will continue to do so until the formal transfer date. As the Fleetwood Museum Manager is still in post and the Trust will be using its volunteers to provide all of the front-of-house services to the visitors, there are minimal additional costs of additional electricity to light the building which is involved in having the Museum open to the public as opposed to being closed for the "care and maintenance regime". These additional costs of no more than a few hundred pounds will need to be covered from the Transformation Reserve.

Legal – the County Council continues to be responsible for the Museum until it is transferred. The decision to transfer the Museum will need to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Environment, Planning & Cultural Services and the Deputy Leader in compliance with the decision taken about museums on 23 August 2016.

Risk management

There are no risks involved in re-opening the Museum other than any possibility of the Fleetwood Museum Trust not completing the transfer. The lengths that they have already gone to together with the financial support that they have from Fleetwood Town Council, makes it highly unlikely that the transfer will not proceed.

The risk of not re-opening on 1 April 2017 means that the Museum will miss a peak holiday period over Easter that could hamper the Trust from meeting its visitor numbers and income targets for later in the year.

Legal

Although this is a temporary arrangement which will apply for a limited period of time, if necessary legal services will enter into any agreements that are deemed appropriate to protect the County Council.

List of Background Papers

Paper	Date	Contact/Tel
Evaluation of Detailed Applications for Museums	23 August 2016	Julie Bell

Reason for inclusion in Part II, if appropriate

Not applicable