

## CABINET

16 January 2018

# RUTLAND COUNTY MUSEUM COLLECTIONS POLICY AND DISPOSALS

### Report of the Chief Executive

Strategic Aim:	Reaching our Full Potential	
Key Decision: No	Forward Plan Reference: FP/101117	
Cabinet Member(s) Responsible:	Mr G Brown, Portfolio Holder for Sport & Recreation, Culture and the Environment	
Contact Officer(s):	Robert Clayton, Head of Culture & Registration	01572 758435 rclayton@rutland.gov.uk
Ward Councillors	All	

### DECISION RECOMMENDATIONS

That Cabinet:

- 1) Approves the disposal of the surplus artefacts identified in Appendix A, presently held by Rutland County Museum, in accordance with the existing Museum Collections Development Policy
- 2) Approves the revised Museum Collections Development Policy 2018 (Appendix B), noting that any future proposals for disposal will also require a separate report and authorisation by Cabinet.

## **1 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 This paper presents for Cabinet approval a list of artefacts from the Rutland County Museum collections for disposal. The artefacts have been identified by the Museum Collections Manager as not being of value in promoting and preserving the heritage and traditions of the County, and whose continuing preservation does not represent effective use of resources allocated to protect the heritage of the County. The Museum Collections Development Policy requires the Governing Body to authorise disposals.
- 1.2 This paper also presents a revised Museum Collections Development Policy, which covers priorities for future museum acquisitions, disposals and ethical collections issues (such as not collecting items resulting from spoliation).

## **2 BACKGROUND AND MAIN CONSIDERATIONS**

- 2.1 Rutland County Museum is an Accredited Museum, under the national scheme operated by Arts Council England. The Museum holds objects in line with its Collections Development Policy, most recently approved by Cabinet on 4<sup>th</sup> November 2014 (Report No. 244/2014).
- 2.2 Over its almost 50 years of operation, a significant number of items have been deposited with the Museum which either duplicate, or do not add value to the collections, particularly items which have no known connection with the history of the County.
- 2.3 The Museum presently holds around 13,000 artefacts, of which only around 1,000 are currently able to be displayed. Some of the duplicate or non-Rutland items take up significant floor space, and do not reflect the broad range of the collections covering many historical periods in the history of Rutland.
- 2.4 In line with the existing policy, 137 items have been identified for disposal from the Museum collections. These items are listed in full at Appendix A, which gives details of their provenance (where known) and the reason for their being selected for disposal. It is the advice of the Museum Collections Manager that these artefacts should be disposed of, to enable more focus to be placed on items that are of importance to the local area.
- 2.5 Disposal of these objects will enable the Museum premises to be used more effectively, allowing better promotion of the heritage and traditions of Rutland, and securing in the longer term the collections which the Museum holds for the residents of Rutland.
- 2.6 The Collections Manager (following the Collections Development Policy and best practice) proposes to offer the objects in the first instance to other accredited heritage sites as additions to their collections, and if there is no interest may dispose of the items either by sale, auction or donation to other bodies / individuals (including the original owner of the object if known). Priority will be given to keeping the object in the public domain. If items cannot be disposed of in other ways, as a final option items may be dismantled and disposed of in an environmentally friendly manner.
- 2.7 Some of the items were transferred to the Museum as part of the original acquisition of the Bolton Collection from Casterton Secondary Modern School.

This was at a time when formal acquisitions policies did not exist. As such the original ownership of some of these items is not known. The listing also includes a number of items which have not been added to the Museum's accessions register, as records of their deposit cannot be identified. In light of this, it is suggested that all decisions are taken openly, to publicise the disposal through local press in a positive manner, and look into any case of claimed ownership by an individual with a view to returning to them if necessary.

- 2.8 Museum Policies require periodic review, and the revised Collections Development Policy 2018 (attached at Appendix B) has been drafted using Arts Council England best practice guidelines. Elements indicated in bold are taken directly from the guidance published at <http://www.artscouncil.org.uk/accreditation-scheme/support-and-advice#section-2>. The most significant change from the 2014 policy is the inclusion of large farm and agricultural equipment as a priority collection for consideration for alternative display or rationalisation in the future.
- 2.9 This does not mean that all of the farming equipment will be disposed of, but it will be possible to explore new ways of displaying the equipment, potentially at an alternative site with other partners. With large agricultural heritage items identified in this way, an extensive process of review will be undertaken. Some items may, in due course, be identified for disposal, but any such proposal will be subject to a formal report to Cabinet and consultation, as is the case with the artefacts identified in Appendix A.
- 2.10 This process could release a significant proportion of the Museum floor-space for alternative uses. A period of time would be required to identify alternative settings, and to work with partners to relocate the items.

### **3 CONSULTATION**

- 3.1 The Friends of Rutland County Museum and Oakham Castle, and the Rutland Local History and Records Society, have both been informed of the proposals included in this report, and have received advance copies of both the list of items proposed for disposal, and the revised policy.

### **4 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS**

- 4.1 Periodic disposal of items from Museum collections which do not meet with agreed collecting policies is a necessary requirement to ensure that Museums are not burdened with artefacts which do not meet the purposes for which the museum exists. To protect the collections from being dispersed or damaged, the Museum abides by the Collections Development Policy, which requires the Governing Body to consider and authorise disposals.

### **5 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 Any artefacts identified for disposal which are not found new homes with other public bodies may generate a small revenue income, realised through their sale. In line with the Collections Development Policy, the funds should be earmarked to undertake improvements to the remaining collections. The costs of undertaking the disposals are largely staff time only, any organisations acquiring items will be required to fund transportation and insurance costs themselves.

- 5.2 Amending the Collections Development Policy has no direct financial implications, although it does confirm the ethical way in which artefacts may be disposed of from the collections, which can result in the receipt of funding through sale.

## **6 LEGAL AND GOVERNANCE CONSIDERATIONS**

- 6.1 This report proposes disposals in line with current Museum Policy, and the revised Policy is in accordance with Arts Council England best practice museum guidelines (elements indicated in **bold type** in Appendix B). Cabinet, as the Governing Body of the Museum, is authorised to approve of disposals from the Museum collection.
- 6.2 There are occasional controversies that arise as a result of Museums attempting to sell significant objects from their collections to raise funds or mitigate cuts. Such sales are regarded as unethical, and have resulted in those Museums losing their Accreditation Status. This means they cannot apply for many streams of funding (including Heritage Lottery Fund grants) and are not able to receive loans or support from other Museums. The revised policy would not enable such financially motivated disposals.
- 6.3 There are no governance implications arising from the report.

## **7 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT**

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment Screening Form has been completed; no significant impacts have been identified.

## **8 COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 No community safety implications have been identified.

## **9 HEALTH AND WELLBEING IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 No health and wellbeing implications have been identified.

## **10 ORGANISATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Environmental implications: If no suitable locations can be found for the artefacts proposed for disposal, through gift, loan or sale, then the items may be destroyed in an environmentally friendly manner.

## **11 CONCLUSION AND SUMMARY OF REASONS FOR THE RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 11.1 Cabinet is recommended to approve the disposal of the Museum artefacts identified in Appendix A, and to approve the revised Collections Development Policy attached as Appendix B.
- 11.2 Approval for following the steps as outlined in the policy will help to ensure that Rutland County Museum is able to retain its status as an Accredited Museum, which is a quality standard for the service.
- 11.3 Disposal of items not required as part of the collection will enable the Council to review the best use of the Museum footprint in the future, in line with the corporate

strategy of rationalising the spaces occupied by the Council.

11.4 Any future proposals for disposal of artefacts will be presented to Cabinet for consideration, following review and consultation.

## **12 BACKGROUND PAPERS**

12.1 There are no additional background papers to the report.

## **13 APPENDICES**

13.1 Appendix A – Museum Artefacts Proposed for Disposal

13.2 Appendix B – Museum Collections Development Policy 2018

**A Large Print or Braille Version of this Report is available upon request – Contact 01572 722577.**