

**Report to:** EXECUTIVE CABINET

**Date:** 22 November 2023

**Executive Member/Reporting Officer:** Councillor Vimal Choksi (Towns and Communities)  
Emma Varnam (Assistant Director, Operations and Neighbourhoods)

**Subject:** MUSEUMS FORWARD PLAN

**Report Summary:** The Council’s Museums and Galleries consist of Portland Basin Museum, Astley Cheetham Art Gallery and the Manchester Regiment collection. The Museums and Galleries are part of Arts Council England’s Museum Accreditation scheme, which is the industry standard for museums and galleries. Tameside Museums have been invited to reapply for Accreditation and in order to achieve it the service needs to have approved plans and policies in place. This report sets out the Museums Forward Plan, Collections Development Policy, Documentation Policy, Care and Conservation Policy and Access Policy for formal consideration and adoption.

**Recommendations:** It is recommended that:  
The contents of this report and associated policies are approved.

**Corporate Plan:** Tameside Museums and Galleries significantly add to the borough’s communities’ sense of pride, our place and shared heritage. They support the very best start in life through activities for children, increase aspiration and hope through life-learning, and are seen as safe, welcoming places to support activity in older age. Museums and galleries can support levels of self-care through a social prescription of cultural participation.

**Policy Implications:** It is essential that any proposals demonstrate value for money and make a clear contribution to Council priorities.

**Financial Implications: (Authorised by the statutory Section 151 Officer & Chief Finance Officer)** There are no direct financial implications arising from this report which sets out the requirements for Tameside Museums to reapply for Accreditation by the Arts Council England to maintain external funding and develop the Museums and Galleries. There are no additional cost implications for achieving Accreditation.  
The current financial position for the Museums service is shown in the table below:

	<b>23/24 Budget £m</b>	<b>23/24 Forecast £m</b>	<b>23/24 Variation £m</b>
Expenditure	0.386	0.417	0.030
Income	(0.039)	(0.039)	0.000
<b>Net</b>	<b>0.348</b>	<b>0.378</b>	<b>0.030</b>

The forecasted overspend is due to non-delivery of the vacancy factor.

The Museums service has been successful in a number of funding bids, including from Museums Development North West and Arts Council England and Stalybridge Capital Regeneration Funding

has been allocated for maintenance works and redevelopment of Astley Cheetham Art Gallery. The service should continue to explore and pursue external funding options to both support existing expenditure and any new projects. The service should ensure that all activities are delivered within the budget available.

**Legal Implications:  
(Authorised by the  
Borough Solicitor)**

As set out in the main body of the report in order to maintain the current funding provisions the council is required to reapply for its accreditation under The Museum Accreditation scheme. The proposals as set out in the report ensure that the necessary steps are taken to meet the accreditation requirements.

**Risk Management:**

The risks are that the Forward Plan and other policies do not achieve Accreditation – the plans and policies have been devised to ensure they are fit for purpose. There is also reputational damage if the Forward Plan is not delivered throughout its lifetime – the plan will be carefully managed and monitored to ensure its delivery.

**Access to Information:**

Not confidential

**Background Information:**

The background papers relating to this report can be inspected by contacting the report writer, Rachel Cornes – Museums Manager for Cultural and Customer Services, Operations and Neighbourhoods.



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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council's Museums and Galleries service, part of Cultural and Customer Services, comprises:
- Portland Basin Museum (Ashton-under-Lyne)
  - Astley Cheetham Art Gallery (Stalybridge)
  - The Manchester Regiment collection
  - Off-site storage space (Ashton-under-Lyne)
- 1.2 The service makes a significant contribution to the priorities of the Council by; supporting a cultural offer that attracts people to the borough; improving the wellbeing of residents; increasing educational attainment and skills levels; and generally providing safe and welcoming venues for residents and visitors to the borough to enjoy.
- 1.3 To attract the necessary external funding to maintain and develop the Museums and Galleries offer, the service must be formally Accredited by Arts Council England. This report sets out the requirements of Accreditation and seeks approval of the required policies.

## **2. MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES SERVICE**

- 2.1 Tameside Museums and Galleries cares for and collect objects which tell the history of the nine towns of Tameside. These include objects relating to social and domestic life, industrial history, natural history and archaeology.
- 2.2 The Manchester Regiment collection belongs to the Duke of Lancaster's Regiment and is on loan to the Council. Tameside Museums and Galleries continue to care for and develop the collection and to use the collection in exhibitions and education projects.
- 2.3 The borough's art collection was bequeathed by J.F Cheetham in the 1930s and is predominantly displayed at Astley Cheetham Art Gallery. The art collection has been added to since the original bequest and includes a large collection of works by Harry Rutherford.
- 2.4 Portland Basin Museum is open 6 days per week. Astley Cheetham Art Gallery is open 17 hours per week. In 2022-23 the service attracted 97,151 visitors across the sites.
- 2.5 A programme of events and activities are programmed at each site throughout the year. A range of school workshops attract school visits from inside and outside the borough. In 2022-23 there were visits from 2,660 school pupils across the sites.

## **3. ACCREDITATION**

- 3.1 The Museum Accreditation scheme is the UK industry standard for museums and galleries. It affirms to those involved with a museum that they are doing the right things to help people engage with collections and protect them for the future. The Museum Accreditation scheme achieves this by making sure museums manage their collections properly, engage with visitors and are governed appropriately. Accreditation covers all types and sizes of museums and galleries and there are currently more than 1700 museums participating in the scheme across the UK.
- 3.2 In February 2015 Tameside Museums and Galleries achieved full Accreditation status for all of its sites. All museums are invited to reapply for Accreditation every 5 years. Tameside was due to be invited in 2020 but the scheme was paused during the Covid-19 pandemic.

- 3.3 The Accreditation process involves the development of an approved Forward Plan for the service. The Forward Plan outlines the main work proposed during 2023-2028 and how the service will be delivered.
- 3.4 Museum Accreditation also requires the Museums and Galleries to have approved policies in place relating to collections care and access to the collections. These policies are Collections Development Policy; Documentation Policy; Collections Care and Conservation Policy; Access Policy.

#### **4. CONSULTATION**

- 4.1 The Museum Service undertakes consultation in various ways, all of which have informed the content of the Forward Plan and of the other policies and plans. Feedback is gained through visitor surveys, comments books, online consultation, websites such as Trip Advisor plus Visit England's Visitor Attraction Quality Assurance Scheme.
- 4.2 To contribute to the development of the Forward Plan, Museums and Galleries undertook an online public consultation, which received 163 responses. People felt the priorities for the service for the next 3-5 years should be to increase events and activities and to improve marketing of the venues and events. People want to see exhibitions that focus on local history and that are based on the borough's museum and art collections. People are interested in seeing more of a focus on the borough's identity, as well as environmental sustainability and health and wellbeing.

#### **5. DEVELOPMENT OF THE FORWARD PLAN**

- 5.1 The Forward Plan has been developed by staff at the Museums and Galleries and has been informed by public consultation, service requirements and the requirements of Accreditation.
- 5.2 The service aims, set out in the Forward Plan, are as follows:
- *Access to services*: ensure that all of our sites are accessible, friendly and have the highest standards of customer care.
  - *Access to the community*: respond to the needs and demands of the local community and to participate fully in the life of Tameside, contributing to the cultural, social and economic activity of the borough.
  - *Access to learning*: offer visitors enjoyable, inspirational and educational experiences.
  - *Access to collections*: ensure that the borough's museums, galleries and collections are cared for and added to, for future generations.
- 5.3 The full Forward Plan 2023-28 can be found at **appendix 1**.

#### **6. DEVELOPMENT OF OTHER MUSEUMS AND GALLERIES POLICIES**

- 6.1 Under the Accreditation Scheme, museums are required to show that they maintain high levels of collections care, have accountability for their collections, develop their collections in a responsible manner and provide suitable public access to the collections. The following policies, which require approval, have been developed by Tameside Museums and Galleries to meet the requirements set out in Accreditation.
- 6.2 The Collections Development Policy provides an overview to the collections and sets the themes and priorities for collecting. It also provides information about the legal and ethical framework for acquiring and disposing of objects. The policy can be found at **appendix 2**.

- 6.3 The Documentation Policy sets out how the museum accounts for the collections it holds. It shows that we follow standard procedures for documenting the objects in our care. The policy can be found at **appendix 3**.
- 6.4 The Care and Conservation Policy outlines how the museum cares for its collections and how ethical and legal requirements are met. It is designed to ensure the long term preservation of the collection and takes into account recognised museum frameworks and standards. The policy can be found at **appendix 4**.
- 6.5 The Access Policy sets out how people can see, use and reference the collections and the buildings they are housed in. It shows that a variety of interpretive methods to exhibit the collections are used and that information is provided to the public as to how they can access the collections. The policy can be found at **appendix 5**.

## **7. FINANCE**

- 7.1 There are no additional cost implications for achieving Accreditation, over and above the museum's core budget.
- 7.2 Stalybridge Capital Regeneration Funding has been allocated for maintenance works and redevelopment of Astley Cheetham Art Gallery.
- 7.3 The museum's activities have been supported through successful funding bids to Museum Development North West, Arts Council England and Army Museums Ogilby Trust. The service will continue to seek new funding to enable it to deliver exciting and innovative projects at all sites and in the local community.

## **8. RISKS**

- 8.1 The risks associated with the Accreditation process are:
- Reputational damage if the Forward Plan is not delivered throughout its life. The Forward Plan will be carefully managed and monitored to ensure its delivery throughout its term.
  - The Forward Plan and other policies do not achieve Accreditation. The plan and policies have been developed with partners to ensure they are fit for purpose and meet current expectations.

## **9. CONCLUSION**

- 9.1 The Museums and Galleries service continues to improve its offer, which contributes to Council priorities around starting well, living well and ageing well. Service improvements have been delivered in partnership with external funders such as Arts Council England and Museum Development North West.
- 9.2 In order to attract funding the service must be Accredited by Arts Council England. The Accreditation process involves the development of a Forward Plan for the service and policies around its collections that must be adopted by the Council.
- 9.3 Public consultation has been undertaken to inform the Forward Plan.
- 9.4 In order to fully deliver on the Forward Plan, financial support will be required from partners and for this to be possible Accreditation must be achieved.

## **10. RECOMMENDATIONS**

10.1 As set out at the front of the report.