

## **Template for Chief Executive Decision Making**

### **Title**

Engaging the Public with the Future of Museums and Galleries

### **Matter for Consideration**

To approve *Culture Kirklees*, the draft Cultural Offer vision for arts and cultural services provided by Kirklees Council in order for public engagement to take place.

Culture Kirklees includes identifying our approach to the display of collections in Museums and Galleries; the sites which will continue as museums; and the sites for which alternative uses will be sought.

To approve engaging the public draft Cultural Vision.

### **Urgency**

The Chief Executive is using his powers under (a) as described below and his emergency powers under (c) described below both of which are contained in Section F of Part 3 of the Council's Constitution (Responsibility for Functions).

Paragraph (a) says that the Chief Executive may "Discharge any function of the Council and Executive which has not been specifically delegated to another officer, committee or otherwise reserved by full Council or the Executive and may direct any Chief Officer not to exercise a delegated function in special circumstances unless they are required to do so by law."

Paragraph (c) says "The Chief Executive (or any Director nominated from time to time by the Chief Executive, or if any such Director is not available or if no such nomination has been made, any Director) is empowered, in consultation with the Leader or relevant Committee Chair (unless the urgency makes this impracticable) to make decisions on any issues in circumstances which he/she reasonably considers to be an emergency, reporting to the Cabinet or relevant Committee as soon as possible thereafter."

In this case, the decisions would ordinarily be matters which could be taken by the Director for Communities, Transformation and Change but the choice about the options which form the basis of the consultation have been the subject of much debate and scrutiny over the last two years. There has been consultation in the last two years about the principle of reducing the number of museums and galleries in order to make the significant savings required as part of the budget which has been considered by Cabinet and decisions taken at Council. The principles and issues have been considered by Cabinet because of the significance of the decisions to the future direction and approach to the provision of cultural services. The savings amount to more than 50% and the decisions will involve the closure of a number of

buildings as museums which are much loved by many members of the public and have been the source of much discussion and debate.

For these reasons, the Chief Executive considers that there are special circumstances which exist as set out in paragraph (a ) above which would mean that it is a decision which should be exercised by the executive rather than by the Director in this case.

As there is currently no Cabinet in place and it is necessary in order to meet the timescales for closure to carry out the engagement exercise prior to a final decision being taken about the proposals, a decision is required to be taken by the Chief Executive using the emergency powers referred to at (c ) above. It is necessary to take this decision as an emergency because:

- In order to do this the Council needs to take a number of actions including consultation with staff, stakeholders and the public and if the timetable to do this does not commence quickly, then the Council cannot make these savings
- In order to meet the savings required by the beginning of the next financial year, the Council needs to meet the following deadlines;
  - begin a staffing review in September 2016 with completion by the end of December 2016
  - end public access to the sites from which the service will withdraw by the end of October 2016 so that they can be de-commissioned by March 2017.

There is a lack of clarity about whether the Council will have a Leader and cabinet in place to make a decision to do this otherwise in a timely fashion. Even if a leader was appointed on 29<sup>th</sup> June, there would be a lead in period for a decision to be made to commence engagement which would delay the service change programme by 8 weeks which is not sustainable in light of the timetable above.

### **Consultation with Elected Members**

In September 2014, the cross party Policy Committee discussed the future of Museums and Galleries. It supported the transformation of museums and galleries; to separate the collections from the buildings; to explore a future use for the sites which would not remain as museums in their present format; to increase the commerciality of the on-going sites; and to increase engagement with the collections especially in community settings. Members requested that there was an exploration of closer collaboration and shared services with other West Yorkshire museums and tourist attractions; a relook at opening hours to ensure that sites were open on bank holidays; and a prioritisation of collections which told the Kirklees' story and reflected better our diverse communities.

In October 2014, the Policy Committee discussed the future of arts services in Kirklees. It was agreed that the Cultural Offer Transformation Programme should be

set up to transform both museums and galleries and arts and creative economy services.

In 2015, a Museum Task Group was set up by the Development and Environment Scrutiny Panel to explore the future of museums and galleries in Kirklees. Their recommendations have been incorporated in to the visioning process.

Discussion has also taken place with the Council's former Cabinet

### **Officer Recommendation**

Officers recommend approval of the draft *Culture Kirklees Strategy to allow public engagement to take place.*

Officers also recommend the delivery of a public engagement programme during July 2016 so that the final vision is well informed and future partners/collaborators can be identified.

### **Leaders Reference Group**

Cllr Cooper asked for information on Huddersfield Town Centre sites that were being considered for the provision of a replacement South Kirklees museum. It was noted that no sites had been identified and that all options and suggestions put forward would be considered.

Cllr Lawson asked if account would be taken of the status of existing museum buildings that would be disposed of/reused and it was noted that the Listed Buildings status of buildings would be considered during the planning/development control process, when consideration was to be given to alternative uses.

Cllr Lawson asked for information on the timescales and type of engagement that would be used during the engagement process. Leaders were told the proposed engagement would run from 4 to 24 July 2016 and would include meetings with Friends Groups, opportunities for members of the public to contribute to the discussion, including an on line questionnaire for people to complete, and information about the options under consideration at current sites.

Cllr Hall asked for clarification on the budget allocation between creative arts and museums and was advised of the decision making at the Budget Council to agree the current allocation and the opportunity in the future for this to be reconsidered at future Council Budget meetings.

Cllr Lawson asked for information on the Councils Retention and Disposals Policy for its Museums Collection. Leaders were told the Council was required to agree and maintain the policy and were given information on the process that had to be followed in instances where artefacts were identified for disposal, including consultation with previous owners (if known), maintaining a register of things to be disposed of and offering the artefact to other museum facilities and, if appropriate, the sale of the item.

Cllr Lawson asked about the terms of the covenant on the Tolson Museum building. It was clarified that the covenant covered educational use. It was further noted that, if an alternative use was not identified and in the eventuality of the sale of the building, Charity Commission Consent would be required and the proceeds of the sale would be for charitable rather than Council use.

Group Leaders agreed to note the content of the draft Kirklees Culture Strategy as the basis for engagement and support the commencement of the proposed public engagement exercise.

### **Conclusions**

The approval of Culture Kirklees will provide information on which engagement can take place on the Council's cultural offer.

### **Decision**

That the draft *Culture Kirklees Strategy* be approved to allow public engagement to take place.

That delivery of a public engagement programme during July 2016 be approved so that the final vision of the Kirklees Cultural Strategy is well informed and future partners/collaborators can be identified.

### **Chief Executive**