

Working Plymouth

Wednesday 30 September 2015

PRESENT:

Councillor Ricketts, in the Chair.

Councillor Murphy, Vice Chair.

Councillors Ball, Sam Davey (substitute for Councillor Wheeler), Deacon, Fletcher, Hendy, Jarvis, Martin Leaves, Morris and Storer.

Apologies for absence: Councillor Wheeler.

Also in attendance: David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development), Paul Brookes (Programme Director, History Centre), Nicola Moyle (Head of Arts and Heritage), Louisa Blight (Collections Manager), Ray Crockett (Naval Heritage Centre), Paul Santillo (Naval Heritage Centre), Ross Jago (Lead Officer) and Helen Rickman (Democratic Support Officer).

The meeting started at 4.30 pm and finished at 6.10 pm.

Note: At a future meeting, the committee will consider the accuracy of these draft minutes, so they may be subject to change. Please check the minutes of that meeting to confirm whether these minutes have been amended.

56. **DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

There were no declarations of interest in accordance with the code of conduct.

57. **CHAIR'S URGENT BUSINESS**

There were no items of Chair's Urgent Business.

58. **THE HISTORY CENTRE**

David Draffan (Assistant Director for Economic Development), Paul Brookes (Programme Director, History Centre), Nicola Moyle (Head of Arts and Heritage), Louisa Blight (Collections Manager), Ray Crockett (Naval Heritage Centre) and Paul Santillo (Naval Heritage Centre) provided Members with a presentation on the History Centre.

Members were informed that –

- (a) in May 2015 the National Heritage Lottery Fund had awarded £13m to the History Centre project;
- (b) the Working Plymouth Panel would be provided with a further presentation upon the History Centre at the 14 October 2015 meeting whereby Event Management, the project contractor, would be in attendance to answer questions;

- (c) South West Film & Television Archive, South West Image Bank, Plymouth University and Plymouth City Council were the four principle partners of the project; the Stakeholders Partnership Board included representation from the Ministry of Defence, BBC, Destination Plymouth, Plymouth College of Art and Plymouth Culture Board;
- (d) the proposed History Centre was situated between the University and College of Art and was on the site of the current museum and library; the impetus for the project centred around the Records Office which contained the city's archives. There was concern that the archives were at risk and needed saving for the future; the History Centre project evolved to save the archives, show off the City's collections of artefacts and provide a new visitor attraction for Plymouth;
- (e) Officers provided the National Heritage Lottery Fund with a review report detailing progress on the project; detailed plans were required to be submitted by Spring 2016 however it was considered that additional funding was required, due to the increased costs linked to inflation. A bid for £4.175m had been submitted to the Arts Council however a decision wouldn't be made until February 2016;
- (f) one of the aims of the History Centre was to try to create a sense of place and identity; changes would be required to the public realm to ensure this was achieved particularly when linking the building to St Luke's Church. It was anticipated that there would be a modest amount of demolition to the rear of the central library where the 1950's extension currently stands to bring the building up to a national standard for exhibition space. There would also be programmable space outside the centre where art collections and heritage displays could be spilled out onto the street creating an active environment both day and night;
- (g) 'Event Communications' were appointed at the end of April 2015 to help develop the content of the project including how internal spaces should be designed to create the desired effects; the café and shop space would also be expanded from original plans;
- (h) the ground floor of the History Centre would allow visitors to walk in the footsteps of Darwin, Drake and Scott, visit the Plymouth portal, explore reasons why men and women have gone out into the wider world, Plymouth's link with the Navy and the importance of the sea to the city; it was planned that the commercial and learning spaces would be massed to the south of the building whilst the visitor offer would be concentrated in the northern part of the building. The gallery space would allow Plymouth to curate major international and national shows;
- (i) upstairs in the History Centre would encourage visitors to explore through the millennia and identify how Plymouth has inspired creativity, paintings, craft and film; to the north of the balcony a suite of spaces would be created to encourage creativity. It was proposed that a woolly mammoth would also be situated in this space as they inhabited Plymouth many years ago;

- (j) Louise Blight was responsible for overseeing the decant and coordinating the development of the 12 separate galleries; each gallery had a lead which was supported through the partnership.

In response to questions raised it was reported that –

- (k) the request for extra funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund was one of the risks involved with the project however Officers were confident that funding would be secured through a variety of sources including the Arts Council; HLR were sympathetic to the rising costs due to increased inflation and a formal bid for funding would be submitted in the Spring of 2016;
- (l) it was estimated that between 250,000 and 300,000 visitors were required per year to ensure the project was sustainable; further analysis was due to be undertaken by a consultancy company on this issue;
- (m) the economic sustainability of the History Centre project in the longer term was detailed in the stage 1 business plan; savings were expected due to the co-location of the library, archives and museum and increased visitor numbers were anticipated with a higher spend per head. In order to complete stage 2 of the project in April 2016, 'Event Communications' would be working alongside the Council and partners to build a financial model of resilience and governance - a five year resilience model would be created;
- (n) study zones had been opened up in several areas throughout the History Centre to ensure that learning didn't take place behind closed doors; in order to help engagement, spaces were designed to be as open as possible to create a characterful space, one whereby children would have space to perform a play, where a collection could be displayed and discussed or where demonstrations could be held;
- (o) officers were actively working to a digitisation programme to digitise as much of the city's archives and collections as possible; this would help to create a portal whereby information could be easily accessed. The use of modern technology was an important aspect of the project to ensure it was up to date with other visitor attractions nationwide;
- (p) Event Communications had previously worked on similar projects throughout the country so were experienced in creating a vision; the Partnership Board were equally involved in the vision for the project and discussing the Masterplan;
- (q) exhibition designers would be responsible for providing the framework for the collections; it was vital that the project told Plymouth's story including its maritime history, its involvement in the war and the impact of the Navy on the city however collections needed to be rotated to create interest and maintain visitor numbers;

- (r) St Luke's Church was bought by Plymouth City Council in the 1960's and had a covenant attached to it relating to its use; Officers were currently in negotiations with the Church of England regarding the covenant and its future use as part of the project;
- (s) the Council had a conservation plan linked to its collections and archives and officers were looking to rationalise collections to ensure that acquisition of different artefacts could take place in the future;
- (t) a Decant Officer had recently been appointed to take a lead on moving the Council's collections offsite to a secure store; Council officers and volunteers would be responsible for moving the majority of items;
- (u) it was the expectation that public access to the History Centre would be free however there may be a charge to access a specific exhibition due to added value; donations would be welcome and voluntary;
- (v) an indicative plan for exhibitions for the History Centre had been programmed from 2020 to 2024; Officers had also planned exhibitions from the point of the building closing to ensure that the museum and library would continue to have a presence in the city despite building work taking place;
- (w) the Herald newspaper would be heavily involved in the marketing of the new name for the History Centre;
- (x) officers were confident that the 2020 completion date for the project would be adhered to; it was planned that the building work would be completed approximately one year before the centre was required to open however this was to allow for the building to be properly fitted out and for collections to be installed;
- (y) it was hoped that the History Centre would play a huge part in the Mayflower 400 celebrations;
- (z) two Cabinet decisions were required to be taken; the first in October 2015 to start a procurement exercise and the second to agree how the project will be modelled and run and revenue calculated.

Members praised the work of officers and were excited to see the project develop.

The Chair thanked officers for their attendance at the meeting and highlighted to all present the opportunity this project would represent for the city.

59. **EXEMPT BUSINESS**

There were no items of exempt business.