

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: 22 MAY 2012
 title: CLITHEROE CASTLE MUSEUM
 submitted by: JOHN HEAP, DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY SERVICES
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1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To bring members up to date with the performance of the facility against original projections;
- 1.2 To confirm changes in the operation, as a result of efficiency savings;
- 1.3 To identify members to serve on the local advisory forum.

Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities

This report contributes to the ambition:

- to sustain a strong and prosperous Ribble Valley by:
 - encouraging economic development with a specific emphasis on tourism;
 - developing with relevant partners, measures to support the visitor economy

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The new museum complex opened in May 2009 after a £3.3m investment funded on the whole by the Heritage Lottery Fund and Borough Council.
- 2.2 In terms of its future operations, it was agreed that Lancashire County Council's Museums Service was best placed to manage the new facility on the Council's behalf.
- 2.3 Such arrangements are detailed in a formal management agreement.
- 2.4 Although the agreement has not been formally signed off by both parties, due to some specific technical issues, the facility has operated against the principles contained within it, and we are now in a position to formally adopt the arrangements.

3 CURRENT SITUATION

- 3.1 In applying to the Heritage Lottery Fund, we had to make a business case for the investment. In terms of admissions, we made the following projections:

	£
2009/10 – 16,000 admissions and 21,745 income	
2010/11 – 18,000 admissions and 24,809 income	
2011/12 – 20,000 admissions and 27,872 income	

These were based on adults, children, groups, schools, and concessions. This forecast represented a significant increase from before the re-development, of just over 10,000 visits per year.

- 3.2 The table enclosed in the appendix shows a breakdown of admissions, by category, for 2011/12. This shows a total of 21,761 for visits to the museum only, which represents an increase of 1,761 against the original projections. The total income from admissions alone was £26,284, which represents a

slight decrease against original projections of £1,588. There was, however, an additional £7,436 generated from events such as Paranormal Activities events, giving an overall income of £33,720.

3.3 As part of the Council's budget process, the museum operation was scrutinized in the same way as directly delivered services, in order to identify efficiency measures. The outcome resulted in a proposal from LMS to reduce winter opening hours, as there were times during the week when visitor numbers were particularly low. They also explored other avenues of income generation. The result is an overall saving in the management fee paid to LMS of £16,593. The key service changes are that opening hours will reduce from 7 to 5 days between November to February half term, and overall opening hours will move from 11am-5pm to 12noon-5pm.

3.4 Within the management agreement, there is a requirement to establish a local advisory forum with the following membership.

Borough Councillors x 2
County Councillors x 2
RVBC Officers x 1
LMS Officers x 1
Stakeholder representatives x 3
Atrium Café x 1

The purpose of the forum will be to monitor the overall performance of the facility, and suggest changes that would be in the interest of the overall operation. It is expected that the forum would meet twice yearly, once at the beginning of the financial year to comment on work programmes etc, and in six months to receive half yearly reviews.

4 **RISK ASSESSMENT**

The approval of this report may have the following implications:

- **Resources** – it is encouraging to see that the facility is performing well against targets. The real challenge will be to sustain such performance in the current economic climate.
- **Technical/Legal** - it is important that the agreement is finally ratified, as it provides a formal framework to assess the ongoing performance of the site.
- **Political** – The Castle & Museum supports the Council's Corporate Strategy as a contributor to tourism-related economic development.
- **Reputation** – The facility is seen as one of the main visitor attractions in the Ribble Valley.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

5.1 Notes the contents of the report, and recognises the ongoing performance of the site;

5.2 Be aware of the changes to opening times and any issues that may arise from them;

5.3 Nominates two representatives to sit on the local advisory forum.

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For further information, please ask for Chris Hughes 01200 414479