

Report of the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee

York Museums Trust Scrutiny Review Final Report – Cover Report

Summary

1. This cover report presents the final report arising from the York Museums Trust (YMT) scrutiny review – see Annex 1. There are a number of detailed annexes supporting the final report which due to their size, have only been made available online at:
<http://democracy.york.gov.uk/ecCatDisplay.aspx?sch=doc&cat=13307&path=13028,13029>
2. This report asks Cabinet to approve the recommendations arising from the review.

Background & Review Remit

3. In November 2011, the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee received a topic assessment report for a scrutiny topic proposed by Councillor Watson, together with the background information on the formation of the Trust and its performance.
4. In January 2012, the Committee received a further briefing paper providing information on the Trust's relationship with the council and its structure, and the original Executive report from July 2002 setting out the purpose of the Trust.
5. Taking into account all of the information provided, the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee agreed Members agreed it would not be appropriate to scrutinise the work of the Trust and their internal processes as originally proposed. However they agreed to form a Task Group to carry out a scrutiny review based on the following remit:

'To determine whether YMT have achieved appropriate collections management standards in line with the Collections Loan Agreement and Collections Management Protocol agreed in 2002'.

Review Conclusions

6. On completion of their review, the Task Group concluded that:
 - An audit carried out by Veritau in November 2011 was insufficiently rigorous in its remit to evidence YMT's appropriate documentation of the collections as a whole (see paragraphs 56-61 of the final report)
 - The disposal of unsuitable/damaged items was just as important as the retaining of items and the development of the collections.
 - The knock on effect of not disposing of unwanted/ duplicate and damaged items and the lack of available storage space had contributed to delaying the progression of work on the collections and to the implementation of YMT's plans for the future.
 - The Council's role in the de-accessioning process needs to be clarified, and should continue to include the council's right to veto the disposal of an item. The Council should also keep a separate record of items signed off, for audit purposes.
 - YMT's Acquisition and Disposal policy needs updating as a matter of urgency (see paragraph 88 of the final report), given that it was supposed to have been rewritten in 2006.
 - YMT should provide a list of all disposals as part of their bi-annual performance reporting to Overview & Scrutiny. The format and content of those reports should also be amended to provide an update specifically focussed on YMT's progress against the Collections Loan Agreement and Collections Management Protocol agreed in 2002.
 - Councillors could help to facilitate the recruitment of volunteers for YMT.
 - It is important that knowledge of the collections is passed on from staff leaving the employ of the Trust to ensure the customer experience remains at a high standard.
 - Achieving Accreditation in collections management and being assessed as a major partner was a considerable achievement by YMT, bearing in mind the Trust took over three very different institutions whose practises in collections management varied

considerably. The Task Group agreed this was a good indication that YMT is achieving an appropriate collections management standard.

Recommendations

7. Therefore, in order to achieve the appropriate collections management standards (in line with the Collections Loan Agreement and Collections Management Protocol agreed in 2002), the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee is now recommending that:
 - i) YMT be requested to provide as a matter of urgency, a presentation to the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee on the key principles that their Acquisition and Disposal policy review will be based on - In order to help frame and support YMT's work on those revisions
 - ii) YMT provide a revised version of the Acquisition and Disposal policy for the Learning & Culture Overview & Scrutiny Committee's consideration at their meeting in May 2013, ahead of it being presented to the appropriate Cabinet Member for approval.
 - iii) the Cabinet Member for Leisure & Culture encourages all Councillors to invite YMT's Volunteers Manager to attend a future ward meeting/ community event and/or identify ward residents who may have useful skills, to help facilitate the recruitment of additional volunteers
 - iv) a mechanism be put in place by YMT to disseminate information from experienced employees leaving the Trust, as a means of enhancing the training of new guides and volunteers
 - v) They support appropriate revisions to the YMT Service Level Agreement to ensure YMT prioritise their work on de-accessioning unwanted/ damaged/duplicate collection items, in order to allow the progression of work on the collections and the implementation of YMT's plans for the future.
 - vi) YMT revise their future bi-annual update reports to Overview & Scrutiny, to ensure they:
 - a) identify their progress against the Collections Loan Agreement and Collections Management Protocol agreed in 2002;

- b) include information on any items disposed of since the last update report.
- vii) The appropriate Cabinet Member seek continued improvement in collection management standards and that this be monitored annually

Council Plan 2011-15

- 8. The success of the Trust and its business plan contributes to the council's priority to create jobs and grow the economy, through its investment in the tourism infrastructure. It also provides opportunities for residents cultural life long learning, across the city.

Risk Management

- 9. The recommendations arising from the review will help to reduce the risk of the cataloguing of the collections not being completed in line with the Partnership Delivery Plan, and will assist YMT in achieving the appropriate collections management standards (in line with the Collections Loan Agreement and Collections Management Protocol agreed in 2002).

Implications Associated with Above Recommendations

- 10. Financial - The recommendations within the report will improve the communication process, thereby assisting the council to identify and accurately report disposal of heritage assets within the Statement of Accounts.
- 11. There are no known Legal, HR, property or other implications which may affect the Council, associated with the recommendations made in this report.

Review Consultation

- 12. The review ran from March to November 2012. The Task Group met with YMT representatives, and Veritau, and their work was supported by the council's Assistant Director of Communities, Culture & Public Realm & YMT officers. As part of their review, the Task Group visited the Castle Museum, Yorkshire Museum and Art Gallery, and all of the Trust's external storage sites.

Options

13. Having considered the scrutiny final report attached, the Cabinet may choose:
- i. To approve the recommendations as presented in the final report
 - ii. Not to approve some or all of the recommendations arising from the review

Recommendations

14. Taking into consideration all of the information contained within the final report attached and its annexes which can be viewed online (see paragraph 1), the Cabinet are recommended to:
- i. Approve the recommendations arising from the review, as shown in paragraph 6 above.

Reason: To conclude the Scrutiny Review in line with CYC Scrutiny procedures and protocols

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Report Approved



Date

December 2012

Wards Affected:

For further information please contact the author of the report

All



Background Papers:

See information contained within the final report attached

Annexes

Annex 1 –Final Report