

Present: Councillor Ric Metcalfe (*in the Chair*),
Councillor Donald Nannestad, Councillor Sue Burke,
Councillor Bob Bushell, Councillor Rebecca Longbottom
and Councillor Naomi Tweddle

Apologies for Absence: None.

62. Confirmation of Minutes - 20 November 2023

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 20 November 2023 be confirmed.

63. Declarations of Interest

No declarations of interest were received.

64. City Council Natural History, Geology and Archaeology Collectios

Purpose of the Report

To recommend to Executive the transfer of legal title to Lincolnshire County Council's Heritage Services that proportion of the artefacts currently within the City Council's ownership that did not have a direct relationship with the City itself. This element finalised the pre-existing agreement in relation to the ongoing operation of the Usher Art Gallery together with the safe storage, conservation and display of the city council's art and artefacts. The proposals had been developed following extensive further negotiations with Lincolnshire County Council.

Decision

1. That the proposed transfer to Lincolnshire County Council Heritage Services of material as listed be approved.
2. That a further report on the remaining items for transfer in due course be received.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None were considered.

Reasons for the Decision

Members would recall the lengthy and complex negotiations with Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) over a three-year period to secure the future of the Usher Gallery as an art gallery. This culminated in a report to this committee on 25 August 2021 which led to the approval of three agreements:

- A lease variation for the Usher Gallery, which enabled wider use of the building by LCC in limited circumstances and introduced the option of a break clause to the lease after 20 years (31st March 2042)

- A service level agreement which defined the hours and days of operation of the gallery, the role and financial support of the city council, and overall principles for the management of the city council's art and artefacts (including transfer of title for some artefacts). A rolling agreement was made with a review point after three years (March 2025) and every two years thereafter.
- A detailed collections management agreement which outlined how the collections themselves would be looked after by Lincolnshire County Council (LCC).

The substantial collection of art owned by the City Council was excluded from the agreement to transfer title to the County Council. Also, in term of artefacts in the City Council's ownership, the wider collection related to world cultures was likewise excluded. Therefore, this report focused on artefacts within three broad categories:

- Archaeology (within Lincolnshire)
- Natural History
- Geology

Prior to April 1974, Lincoln County Borough Council owned and operated the City and County Museum and the Usher Gallery. Through local government reorganisation under the Local Government Act 1972, ownership of the buildings and all collections passed to the City Council. On 24th October 1974, the City Council resolved to appoint the County Council as its agent under s.101 of the Local Government Act 1972 for the operation of the City and County Museum and the Usher Gallery, and the service had operated in this way since, until revised terms were negotiated in November 2021. This report covered the element of those revised terms relating to the transfer of defined artefacts in the City Council's ownership to Lincolnshire County Council.

Members should note that as part of the revised agreement, the County Council made no charge for storing, conserving and curating the City Council's material to national standards. This represented a significant cost saving to the City Council, which had in total over 24,000 pieces of art and artefacts.

It should also be noted that post 1974, the County Council had become the accession body for all such material. Therefore, for some collections ownership was split between the City Council (pre 1974 donations) and LCC (all post 1974 donations).

The full list of objects to be transferred ran to 794 pages of individual detailed listings, a 10-page random sample extract had been taken from each listing to provide an illustration of the type of material to be transferred, reproduced in **Appendix C to E** of the officers report.

The overall view was that this represented a positive for both the City and County Councils and was the right approach with regard to the correct curation of these collections. For those collections not forming part of this agreement, they were retained by the Council, and hence remained the ultimate owner of the materials found in Lincoln or given specifically to the City, and the City Council would continue to hold the ultimate say over their care. For the rest of the items/collections, these would move into the ownership of LCC, an accredited body committed to looking after them.

65. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that the press and public be excluded from the meeting during consideration of the following item of business because it was likely that if members of the public were present there would be a disclosure to them of 'exempt information' as defined by Section 100I and Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972.

This item was considered in private as it was likely to disclose exempt information, as defined in Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. No representations had been received in relation to the proposal to consider this item in private.

66. Write Outs of Irrecoverable Non-Domestic Rates, Sundry Debtors, Council Tax and Overpayment of Housing Benefit

Purpose of Report

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Decision

That the recommendation to the Executive, as set out in the exempt report, be approved.

Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.

Reasons for the Decision

As detailed in the exempt report to the Executive.