

# Southend-on-Sea Borough Council

Report of Corporate Director for  
Place  
to  
Cabinet  
on  
11th November 2014

Agenda  
Item No.

19

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**Update of Southend Museums' Collections Development Policy**  
**Executive Councillor: Councillor Graham Longley**  
***A Part 1 Agenda Item***

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**1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To obtain members' approval of the updated Southend Museums Service Collections Development Policy, the previous version of which will expire this year.

**2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 That the Collections Development Policy 2014-2019 is approved.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Museum Collections Development Policies are essential for Museum Accreditation and Southend's updated version is now based upon the recommended template provided by Arts Council England (ACE). A Collections Development Policy generally includes the museum's statement of purpose, the geographical collecting area (in the case of local museums), an outline of what is already in a museum's collection, what is intended to be collected in the future and why. The document also outlines a museum's policy on disposal of collections.

Collection Development Policies are essential tools for maintaining sensible collecting practices as storage capacity in museums is always at a premium and items which are irrelevant to the museum's purpose take up space but may never be exhibited. The Policy can also help inform museum staff when considering potential donations or purchases, as it outlines gaps in the collection that might be filled as well as listing what has already been collected.

3.2 Southend Museums Service's Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2009-2014 was approved by Cabinet in 2009. The updated version, now titled Collections Development Policy (appendix 1), makes mention of new collecting areas which have developed since that date and takes into account collecting that has now taken place and can be closed, as well as that which it has been decided is no longer relevant or suitable. Below is a summary of the changes to the document:

3.3 Explanatory notes for revisions to 2009-2014 Acquisition and Disposals Policy:

The following major changes have been made to the policy (in addition to certain minor phrases or words which have been removed or changed due to repetition, incorrect information or to update information).

3.4 Page 2

- The collecting area is greater than simply Southend-on-Sea and this sentence has been changed to reflect this – it is particularly important to mention the Thames Estuary as a collecting area.
- 'Maintain and interpret for the public, historic buildings Prittlewell Priory and Southchurch Hall' has been added.

3.5 Page 5

- Good representations of ships and boats with a strong Thames Estuary connection is an area of the art collection in which we could be stronger so this has been added.

3.6 Page 9

- 'Local' and 'social' history collections are now to be merged in the policy instead of separate as many elements are the same

3.7 Page 12

- 'Areas for active collecting would include items of furniture and furnishings to enhance room settings' has been removed as a collecting area. This is due to so many examples having been already collected, restrictions upon storage space and the fact that the, now old fashioned, room set type of display is unlikely to feature in the Museum in future. However, such items may still be acquired under special circumstances.
- Many examples of toys and games have now been collected and any which were not made in the area will not now be collected.

3.8 Page 13

- Ship and small boat models to represent those which use/have used the Estuary have been added as a category. These will enhance the collections and fulfil our 'Thames Estuary' remit.
- Leigh-on-Sea Maritime Museum has been added to the list of Museums. Their future collecting policy may require changes to our own and this has been acknowledged.

### 3.9 Page 17

- The important collection of bathing suits donated in 2009 has been added.

### 3.10 Page 20

- Since writing the policy, Southend Museums have become the repository for Thames Estuary shipwreck finds – the updated wording reflects this.

## 4. Other Options

- 4.1 To not update the policy. This is not recommended as an updated document is required to meet museum accreditation standards.

## 5. Reasons for Recommendations

- 5.1 It is crucial to keep working documents such as this up to date as situations change and develop. It will ensure that the Museums Service is collecting in the appropriate areas and meets national accreditation standards and is an essential requirement for access to funding streams.

## 6. Corporate Implications

### 6.1 Contribution to Council's Vision and Corporate Priorities

6.1.1 The development of the Town's Museums is an integral part of Corporate Priority 5 'To support Southend to be active and alive with sport and culture'.

6.1.2 The maintenance of high standards of collections care is in accordance with Corporate Priority 10, to 'Deliver targeted services that meet the identified needs of our community'.

### 6.2 Financial Implications

6.2.1 All major grant givers require that Museums have up to date Collections Development Policies.

6.2.2 No addition costs as such would be incurred through the proposed changes to the collecting policy. Funding sources for purchases for the collections are already dealt with on a case by case basis and this will remain the situation.

### 6.3 Legal Implications

6.3.1 There are no legal implications as such in regards to the proposed changes

### 6.4 People Implications

6.4.1 There are no people implications as a result of this report

## **6.5 Property Implications**

6.5.1 The proposed changes reflect the fact that storage of large items such as furniture is costly and that the available storage spaces must be used to maximum advantage.

## **6.6 Consultation**

6.6.1 Consultation with the Arts Council has not been necessary for the minor changes proposed.

6.6.2 Other museums in our region, and those with similar collecting areas, were consulted when the 2009-2014 Policy was written and no additional consultation has been deemed necessary for the updated version.

## **6.7 Equalities and Diversity Implications**

6.7.1 There are no equalities and diversity Implications.

## **6.8 Risk Assessment**

6.8.1 The risks associated with not having an up to date Collections Management Policy include the following:

- Reaching capacity of storage - collecting of certain items could continue unabated despite the fact that such items are already present in the collection or have been deemed irrelevant to our collecting area.
- New and important collecting areas could be neglected through an out of date policy and the Museums Service will not meet its full potential. For example, the nationally important Thames Estuary archaeology has now been included as a collecting area.

## **6.9 Value for Money**

6.9.1 Resources will be much better used in the Museums Service if they are put towards more focused collecting priorities.

## **6.10 Community Safety Implications**

6.10.1 There are no community safety implications as a result of the report.

## **6.11 Environmental Impact**

6.11.1 There is no environmental impact.

## **7. Background Papers**

7.1 Acquisitions and Disposals Policy 2009 – 2014

## **8. Appendices**

8.1.1 Collections Development Policy 2014 - 2019