

Thursday, 6 March 2025

Report of the Portfolio Holder for People Services, Engagement and Leisure

**Museum Collections disposals
Tamworth Castle Museum**

Exempt Information

None

Purpose

To seek approval for the proposed dispersal / disposal of specified items from Tamworth Castle Collections in accordance with Tamworth Castle's Collections Development Policy 2023 (Item 5. Rationalisation and Disposal and Item 16. Disposal procedures).

To seek delegated authority to support and streamline collections review processes which are required to ensure high standards of conservation care and access in accordance with museum accreditation standards.

Recommendations

It is recommended that:

1. Items of unused furniture and collected fireplace surrounds be dispersed /disposed of in an ethical and appropriate manner according to national Museums Association guidelines and the updated Disposals Toolkit (2023). See Appendix 1 for summary of Tamworth Castle Museum Collections Assessments which identify objects suitable for disposal. Individual assessments are attached at Appendix 2.
2. In accordance with ethical disposal procedures objects that are identified as suitable for disposal are reused or repurposed within community venues and offered via the Staffordshire History Network forum to museums. Objects which are not repurposed and are of suitable condition may be auctioned.
3. Approval is given for delegated authority to the Portfolio Holder for People Services, Engagement and Leisure, Executive Director Communities, Executive Director Finance, Assistant Director for Regeneration and Growth and the Castle Museum and Archives Manager to approve further necessary disposals identified through collections review processes.

Executive Summary

Tamworth Castle Museum is developing a programme of rationalisation following a full audit of the museum collections in accordance with the Collections Development Policy (see Background).

Spectrum / Collections Trust 2022 Deaccessioning and Disposal procedure has been followed, together with the Museums Association's: 'Off the Shelf: A Toolkit for Ethical Transfer, Reuse and Disposal' 2023 which requires that decisions to remove items from the collections be made by the museum's governing body (see Background).

Following assessments of the appended list of items (see Appendix 1) it is recommended that they be approved by the governing body of the museum, Tamworth Borough Council and / or the Authorised Officers, for dispersal / disposal.

Each item has been photographed and assessed according to the Object Assessment Criteria supplied by Staffordshire Museums Service.

It is proposed that delegated authority is approved to expedite future decision making in relation to rationalisation considered as part of collections review.

Options Considered

- Furniture items are being considered for reuse within community venues and museums or disposal. The items have been selected on the basis of being underused and have been in storage since 2010.
- Fireplace surrounds were acquired in late 1960's and early 1970's have remained in storage with no identified options for their use or installation.
- Return to the documented donors of some furniture objects has been investigated. Due diligence has been observed.
- A school will be given the option to have a very old desk returned to them from the original founding school.
- Items of furniture acquired prior to older buildings being demolished in the town centre will be offered for use within the community and therefore will be on public display and used.
- Fireplace surrounds acquired prior to older buildings being demolished in the town centre will be offered on the Staffordshire History Network forum.
- Three items of furniture will be reused in Tamworth Castle for display purposes and event use.
- Items of furniture and fire surrounds which are not appropriate for reuse or dispersal will be disposed of at auction and any money from the sale will be used for the conservation care of the rest of the collections as determined by Museum Association Code of Ethics.

Resource Implications

None

Legal/Risk Implications Background

The following risks have been identified and addressed prior to this report:

1. The last known address of the documented donor of furniture has been checked and cannot be traced.
2. Accession records have been checked to ensure that Tamworth Castle Museum or Tamworth Borough Council has legal ownership of the items selected for dispersal / disposal.
3. Records have been checked to ensure that no grant funding from external bodies was provided for the purchase of any items.

Equalities Implications

None – see EQSHIA in appendices

Environment and Sustainability Implications (including climate change)

'Ethical transfer, reuse, deaccessioning and disposal are every day and necessary parts of a sustainable collections management approach and the need for this work is urgent. Museums must do their part to address the climate crisis for the benefit of society through their collections management practices. Museum stores can have a significant number of items which have low cultural or research value. If these items are not being used then it is important that resources and capacity are redirected to other parts of the collection'.

Museums Association's: 'Off the Shelf: A Toolkit for Ethical Transfer, Reuse and Disposal' 2023.

Background Information

In July 2023 Tamworth Castle Museum Collections Development Policy was approved by Cabinet as part of the Arts Council England re-accreditation review which resulted in approval of full museum accreditation for 5 years.

The development, adoption and implementation of compulsory policies and plans by a governing body of a museum is a requirement of the Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom. The Collections Development Policy represents the aims and objectives of responsible collections management at Tamworth Castle Museum. The policy outlines and defines the current object collections and the ways in which we will continue to collect, care for, and manage the material. This includes rationalisation where appropriate to ensure the best standards of conservation care across the collections.

'Museums hold their collections in trust for the public and have the responsibility of managing and preserving them for use now and in the future. Museums also have a responsibility to ensure that their collections remain relevant and manageable. Removing items from museum collections is vital to ensure that museums are able to maintain and create relevant and dynamic collections, while avoiding becoming a permanent store for items which no longer meet the needs of the communities they serve'.

Museums Association's: 'Off the Shelf: A Toolkit for Ethical Transfer, Reuse and Disposal' 2023 further states that: 'Decisions to remove items from the collections should be made by the museum's governing body, acting on the advice of relevant staff, or must have been made through a system of delegated authority for deaccessioning decisions. Decisions to remove must not be made by a member of staff acting alone. The final decision relating to the deaccessioning of an item should be approved by the governing body directly, or through a process of delegated authority and documented'.

Report Author

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List of Background Papers

Tamworth Castle Museum Collections Development Policy, 2023

Museums Association 'Off the Shelf: A Toolkit for Ethical Transfer, Reuse, Disposal', 2023

Collections Trust – Deaccessioning and Disposal, 2022

Appendices

Appendix 1 Summary of items proposed for disposal

Appendices 2a – 2am Individual assessments

Appendix 3 Assessment criteria

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