

**Report to:** Lead Member for Transport and Environment

**Date of meeting:** 22 November 2021

**By:** Director of Communities, Economy and Transport

**Title:** Redundant assets of the Library and Information Service

**Purpose:** To seek approval to dispose of museum stock previously used by the Schools Library and Museum Service.

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**RECOMMENDATIONS:** The Lead Member is recommended to:

- (1) note that the proposed phased approach to disposal seeks to ensure that as many items as possible are donated to museums, galleries, and schools to maximise their use for educational purposes;**
  - (2) note that following an assessment by the County Archivist, artwork of cultural or historical significance to East Sussex will be relocated to The Keep and available to residents to view; and**
  - (3) approve the disposal of stock from the Schools Library and Museum Service collection.**
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## **1 Background Information**

1.1. The Schools Library and Museum Service (SLAMS) was a non-statutory service which supported learning within East Sussex and in neighbouring Local Authorities by lending library and museum stock suitable for classroom-based learning. This was a traded service, funded by schools paying for services, either on a subscription or a pay-as you-go basis. However, with fewer schools buying services each year resulting in decreasing income, the decision was taken in the 2018 Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy (LSCS) to cease provision as it was no longer financially viable.

1.2. We now offer the more affordable and popular of our charged services to all schools (which include advisory visits, stock selection and the East Sussex Book Award), as well as a free library membership specifically for teachers. In addition, we target schools in areas of need with dedicated free literacy and reading support through outreach activities. This is part of our offer for Children and Young People and allows teachers and children to benefit from the expertise of our librarians.

1.3. SLAMs began in the early 1960's, with most museum items collected during the 1960s and 1970s. A number of items were gifted to the service, and this information is recorded in ledgers. The stock is currently held at Unit D, Ropemaker Park, Hailsham. The LSCS set out that we would offer our museum stock to The Keep as well as local museums and collections, to maximise the number of items that are retained for local access and minimise those that are destroyed.

1.4. As shown in Appendix A there are more than 1,200 items in the collection and these include 875 singular items, 8 diorama and 74 containers holding various discs, artworks, fabrics, and equipment. The items, models, and artefacts all vary in condition due to their nature of use and the ledgers show that 698 were donated. The collection includes fossils as well as taxidermy, educational models, dioramas, tools, jewellery, and textiles.

1.5. The Council does not have the expertise or appropriate facilities to look after these collections in a manner that enables the public to view them. This paper sets out a disposal proposal which prioritises their future care.

## 2 Supporting Information

2.1. The value and local relevance of the items ranges significantly across the collections. Auctioneers have estimated the total value of all items to be between £20,000 and £50,000. The County Archivist has checked for any items of cultural or historical significance to East Sussex and arranged for the relocation of artwork of local relevance to The Keep.

2.2. The framework for the proposed disposal is a phased approach to enable items of interest to be held in the public domain in future. Local museums and galleries will be offered first refusal, there will be a number of subsequent steps before any items are recycled or destroyed. The proposed disposal phases are:

- **Phase 1** offer local museums, galleries, and schools as well as the High Weald Education Centre the opportunity to take items which add to their collections as a free donation.
- **Phase 2** list the items on the Museum Associations “Find an Object” site (for free).
- **Phase 3** contact known donors to offer first refusal of a free return.
- **Phase 4** sale through an auction house with any income generated being directly reinvested in the Library and Information Service. Where appropriate items will be sold in specialist sales.
- **Phase 5** offer items free to local relevant organisations such as amateur dramatics, historical societies, and charities.
- **Phase 6** items that remain are recycled or destroyed.

2.3. This disposal process provides organisations in the public domain with the opportunity to add to their collections while applying the principles of the Corporate Disposal Policy and making best use of the County Council’s assets.

## 3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations

3.1. SLAMS ceased in 2018 following a review of the service during the development of the Libraries Strategic Commissioning Strategy, however a range of new services were introduced as part of our Children and Young People offer including a library membership specifically for teachers and targeted librarian outreach to areas of need. Following the closure of SLAMS there are over 1,200 items held at Ropemaker Park without the facilities to maintain the collection in the long term or provide access to the public. Artwork of local significance will be moved to The Keep and a proposed phased disposal approach has been developed. The phased approach prioritises the donation to museums, galleries, and schools to maximise use for educational purposes.

3.2. The Lead Member for Transport and Environment is therefore recommended to agree to the proposals to dispose of the redundant SLAMS stock held at Ropemaker Park.

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LOCAL MEMBERS

All

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None