

**Report to:** Lead Member for Community Services

**Date of meeting:** 25 May 2016

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

**Title:** Redundant assets of the Schools Library and Museum Service

**Purpose:** To endorse proposals to dispose of redundant museum stock belonging to the Schools Library and Museum Service.

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**RECOMMENDATION:** The Lead Member is recommended to approve the disposal of identified redundant or damaged museum stock from the Schools Library and Museum Service collection, pursuing income generation opportunities where applicable.

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## **1 Background Information**

1.1. The Schools Library and Museum Service (SLAMs) supports learning within East Sussex and in neighbouring Local Authorities through supplying library and museum stock that is suitable for classroom based learning. In the school year 2015/16, 45 schools accessed the museum offering from the SLAMs.

1.2. The SLAMs began in the early 1960's, with most items bought during the 1960's and 1970's. A small number of items have been gifted to the service, and this information is recorded in ledgers.

1.3. There are currently 1,200 loan boxes that schools have access to, and a further collection of items that have never been added to loan boxes, which are stored within the SLAMs collection.

1.4. The museum collection was primarily compiled in the decades before the introduction of the national curriculum (1988), and therefore the wide ranging nature of the collection is not consistent with the topics covered in the national curriculum. This has resulted in excess items that are no longer requested by schools.

1.5. The SLAMs stock is currently held at Ropemaker Park, Hailsham.

## **2 Supporting Information**

2.1. A rationalisation of the museum stock has recently been undertaken by SLAMs librarians, and as a result approximately 300 items have been identified as no longer suitable. These items are damaged, obsolete, or no longer suitable to support SLAMs offering or the national curriculum. The items listed have been identified as either damaged or have not been requested in over 5 years (equivalent to 15 loan periods). These items are listed in Appendix 1. Disposal of these items will not in any way compromise our ability to offer a comprehensive museum offering to schools.

2.2. The assets identified include:

- Textiles (44 items);
- Ceramics (24 items);
- Models (44 items);
- Biology models (12 items);
- Taxidermy Animals (7 items);
- Taxidermy Birds (15 items);
- Natural history specimens (19 items);
- Formaldehyde Specimens (26 items);
- Miscellaneous (32 items).

2.3. Although most stock is thought to have been purchased by the County Council for the SLAMs collection, it is proposed that any items which have been identified as items for removal from the SLAMs collection are traced (where possible) through the surviving ledgers to ensure that they were not gifted to the service with conditions that may prevent their disposal. Where conditions have been made, efforts will be made to contact the donor or their family, to confirm what impact the conditions imposed have on the service's ability to dispose of the item.

2.4. Both the Cultural Strategy Manager and the County Archaeologist have viewed the list of redundant assets and have confirmed that there are no items of cultural or historical significance to either East Sussex, or the country.

2.5. It is proposed that when developing disposal plans, income generation is considered to maximise the County Council's assets. Approximately 15% of the identified stock is damaged or obsolete and therefore unsuitable to be sold. However with the remaining items it is proposed that these are sold via appropriate channels, with any income going towards the running costs of the Library and Information Service. Because a significant proportion of the stock is damaged and it is considered unlikely that the items have any significant individual or collective value, the items have not been valued ahead of a decision by Lead Member to dispense with them. Any items remaining unsold will be safely disposed of.

2.6. An assessment has been undertaken which explored the legalities of disposing of a museum collection, and it was concluded that as the SLAMs collection is not an accredited museum collection it is exempt from disposal of assets guidelines published by the Museums Association.

### **3 Conclusion and Reasons for Recommendations**

3.1. These proposals outline the recommendation to dispose of redundant assets belonging to the Schools Library and Museum Service whilst maximising the income generation potential. Consideration has been given to the remaining SLAMs assets, and a comprehensive offering will be maintained.

3.2. The Lead Member for Community Services is therefore recommended to agree to the proposals to dispose of the currently identified redundant SLAMs museum stock held at Ropemaker Park.

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#### LOCAL MEMBERS

All

#### BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None