

## **Malmesbury Town Hall and Athelstan Museum**

### **1. Purpose of Report**

- 1.1 To seek the approval of Executive to transfer the freehold of Malmesbury Town Hall complex (including the Athelstan Museum, the Tourist Information Centre, the car park and the public conveniences located to the rear of the building) to Malmesbury Town Council.
- 1.2 To seek the approval of Executive to devolve the management of Athelstan Museum

### **2. Recommendations**

- 2.1 **The business plan – ‘Planning for a sustainable future’ prepared by Malmesbury Town Council attached to this report as Appendix 1 be noted.**
- 2.2 **The freehold for the Malmesbury Town Hall complex be transferred to Malmesbury Town Council for the purposes set out in the business plan for £1 on April 1, 2006**
- 2.3 **The Council shall cease to be responsible for the operation and maintenance of the public conveniences from April 1, 2006.**
- 2.4 **The revenue contribution from the Council to Malmesbury Town Council towards the running costs of the Town Hall complex will be £16,500, £11,000 and £5,500 over the next three years with effect from April 1, 2006 and nil contribution after April 2009.**
- 2.5 **Authority be delegated to the Planning Services Strategic Manager in consultation with the Lead Member to agree a capital contribution towards the costs of re-developing the town hall complex to a maximum of £77,000.**
- 2.6 **The business plan – ‘Athelstan Museum Planning for Regeneration’ prepared by the Friends of Athelstan Museum attached to this report as Appendix 2 be noted.**
- 2.7 **That Council devolve the management of Athelstan Museum to the Friends of Athelstan Museum with the Council retaining responsibility for the collection initially, for which appropriate monitoring systems need to be implemented from April 1, 2006**
- 2.8 **That Council make a revenue contribution of £2,000 for each of the first three years to the Friends of Athelstan Museum.**
- 2.9 **That authority be delegated to the Regeneration and Asset Management Team Leader to consider revenue funding requests from the Friends of Athelstan Museum for specific projects, to be met from the three year phased out funding as outlined in section 6.3.**
- 2.10 **That the revenue contribution from the Council to Malmesbury Town Council towards the Tourist Information Centre will be £3,750, £2,500 and £1,250 over the next three years with effect from April 1 2006 and nil contribution after April 2009.**

**3. Links to the Corporate Business Plan**

3.1 To maximise the use of Council resources in accordance with the Asset Management Plan and to progress the Council's devolution policy.

**4. General Background Information**

4.1 On July 19, 2005 the Executive resolved :

- (1) That the Executive acknowledges the decision of Malmesbury Town Council to offer to purchase the Malmesbury Town Hall for one pound.
- (2) That Malmesbury Town Council submit a detailed business case for the refurbishment and future management of the Malmesbury Town Hall by December 2005.
- (3) That the business case is to include the allocation of space within the building for the Museum and its collection.
- (4) That the business case is also to include a revenue funding contribution from the District Council for the first three years following transfer calculated as follows:
  - Year One 75% of 2004/05 revenue costs
  - Year Two: 50%
  - Year Three: 25%
  - Subsequent Years: Nil
- (5) Malmesbury Town Council be requested to co-operate with the District Council in continuing the work on the development brief, to include the option to downsize the museum and relocate with other town council services as outlined in the report, subject to a maximum expenditure by the District Council of £50,000.

4.2 Malmesbury Town Council and the Friends of Athelstan Museum (FOAM) have produced separate business plans that are attached as appendix one and two respectively to this report.

4.3 Both business plans are comprehensive and appear sufficiently robust to justify the transfer of the Town Hall complex.

**5. Athelstan Museum**

5.1 A comprehensive report on the history of the Museum and the issues it has, was presented to the Executive on 19 July 2005.

5.2 The main issues in the FOAM Business Plan can be summarised as follows:

- It links to the town council business plan in that it includes a three stage transition period for keeping the Museum open as it is with some innovative exhibitions in stage one to linking the Museum to the Tourist Information Centre in stage three.

- That FOAM wish to take over responsibility for managing the Museum initially and then for the collection (the district council retaining responsibility initially) once the Museum has a secure long term future in the town hall. FOAM would then establish a separate trust to take ownership of the collection.
- The Museum would initially be run by volunteers with FOAM requesting an initial £2,000 per annum revenue funding and the right to apply for specific projects as they are costed.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The revenue contributions to Malmesbury Town Council for running the town hall complex can be met from existing revenue budgets, and the reduced contribution in future years will be built into the Medium Term Finance Plan
- 6.2 Members should note that there is a potential shortfall in capital funding depending on the receipt achieved from selling the land to the rear of the building. Depending on the outcome of this, it is proposed that the Council will make a contribution up to a maximum of £77,000 towards the re-development costs. This scheme will need to be added to the proposed capital programme.
- 6.3 On an annual basis, Council currently funds the Museum to a net revenue expenditure excluding staff and administration costs, of £20,500. As per resolution (4) noted in 4.1 of this report, on 19 July the Executive resolved that the business case include a revenue funding contribution from the Council for the first three years following transfer, which calculates to year one 75% (£15,375), year two 50% (£10,250) and year three 25% (£5,125). Total funding over three years being £30,750.
- 6.4 Due principally to the fact that FOAM propose to use the volunteers in stage 1 of the museum transition period, they are only requesting £2,000 ongoing revenue contributions for the first three years, which is appropriate. FOAM wish to be able to apply for revenue funds for special projects for example, special exhibitions and Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliance (not capital works), which is also considered appropriate. It would not be appropriate to transfer the balance of £30,750 to FOAM until it takes responsibility for the collection and the Museum is fully devolved. It is possible to set up a fund that transposes financial years, which will enable balances to be carried over.
- 6.5 With regards to the Tourist Information Centre, the same principal of three year phasing out of District Council funding of (£5,000) as outlined in 6.3, was agreed by the Executive on 19 July 2005, which equates to year one 75% (£3,750), year two 50% (£2,500) and year three 25% (£1,250).

## **7 Community & Environmental Implications**

- 7.1 There is considerable support (demonstrated at a public meeting held during the summer and a petition that was presented to the Council) within the local community for the Town Hall and Museum to be managed at a local level.

**8. Equalities and Diversity Implications**

- 8.1 The DDA work to be undertaken will ensure better public access into the building, and the business plans predict improved opening hours thus making the facilities more accessible.

**9. Human Resources Implications**

- 9.1 These are set out in the confidential report no 17, entitled Malmesbury Town Hall including Athelstan Museum, presented to the Executive on 19 July 2005.

**10. Legal Implications**

- 10.1 The Council's retained valuer has estimated the value of the Town Hall at £400,000. Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972 states that except with the consent of the Secretary of State a local authority shall not dispose of land, otherwise than by way of a short tenancy, for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained
- 10.2 From time to time, the Secretary of State issues General Disposal Consents. The General Disposal Consent 2003 removes the obligation on local authorities to seek consent for the disposal of land at an undervalue provided that the authority considers that the disposal will help secure the promotion or improvement of the economic, social or environmental well-being of their area, and where the undervalue does not exceed £2M.

**Documentation used in the preparation of this report:**

- Malmesbury Town Council business plan
- Friends of Athelstan Museum business plan

**REPORT OF THE PLANNING SERVICES STRATEGIC MANAGER TO THE EXECUTIVE –  
1<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2005**

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