

Committee:	Cabinet	Date:	26 November 2019
Title:	Museum Accreditation review 2019/20: Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Access Policy		
Portfolio Holder:	Cllr Alex Armstrong, Portfolio Holder for Sport, Leisure, Education and the Arts		
Report Author:	Carolyn Wingfield, Curator cwingfield@uttlesford.gov.uk	Key decision:	No
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Summary

1. The Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries is the UK industry standard for museums. It is managed as a UK partnership between Arts Council England, the Welsh Government, Museums Galleries Scotland and the Northern Ireland Museums Council. Accredited status is linked to eligibility for grants and funding from various sources, including the National Lottery Heritage Fund, and museums must re-apply every few years to maintain their Accredited status.
2. Saffron Walden Museum undergoes its next Accreditation review in January to July 2020. In preparation for this, the Museum's key policy documents and forward plan must be reviewed and formally approved by the Council, and submitted with copies of the minutes confirming approval as part of the Accreditation review.
3. Cabinet has already approved the first of these documents, the Collections Development Policy, at its September 2019 meeting. This report presents two further documents for approval – the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and the Access Policy. Both documents have already been considered by the Museum Management Working Group.

Recommendations

4. The Museum Management Working Group recommends Cabinet approve the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and Access Policy.

Financial Implications

5. No expenditure is incurred as a result of the Accreditation Review. There are no fees charged for participation in the Accreditation Scheme. The Museum will lose or restrict its eligibility for external funding and grants if it fails to maintain its Accredited status, including grants from the National Heritage Lottery Fund. This would have a major impact on the Museum's development plans and ability to improve audience engagement and income in the long term, as well as inhibiting the Museum's participation in other medium-term projects and partnerships where full Accredited status is a requirement or expectation.

Background Papers

6. The following papers were referred to by the author in the preparation of this report and are available for inspection from the author of the report.

Accreditation Standard: Accreditation Scheme for Museums and Galleries in the United Kingdom, Arts Council England, November 2018

Accreditation Guidance: Supporting Guidance for Accreditation Standard November 2018, Arts Council England, March 2019

Impact

- 7.

Communication/Consultation	Public confidence in the Museum service is encouraged by Accredited status. The confidence of external funding bodies and other supporting or partnership organisations is encouraged by Accredited status. Key policies and plans, reviewed for Accreditation, communicate the Museum's vision and procedures to the wider world.
Community Safety	None
Equalities	No direct impact, but Accredited status signifies that the Museum's governance arrangements and policies are generally sound, including its Access Policy.
Health and Safety	No direct impact, but Accredited status signifies that the Museum's governance arrangements and policies are generally sound, and management of collections is in keeping with Health & Safety legislation.
Human Rights/Legal Implications	No direct impact, but Accredited status signifies that the Museum's governance arrangements and policies are generally

	sound, including legal and ethical considerations for managing, acquiring and disposing of collections.
Sustainability	None
Ward-specific impacts	None
Workforce/Workplace	All Museum staff's work is affected by Accreditation and maintenance of the required standards.

Situation

8. Attached to this report are the Collections Care and Conservation Policy and the Access Policy. Both documents have undergone thorough review and updating by museum staff and have been discussed and agreed at a meeting of the Museum Management Working Group.
9. The Collections Care and Conservation Policy is a statement of the Museum's duty of care and responsibility for the collections. It explains how the Museum ensures the long-term preservation of its collections, meeting ethical and legal requirements, and provides a suitable physical environment for collections.
10. The Access Policy states how the Museum identifies the differing needs of its users and provides appropriate ways in which users can access the Museum's collections, information and services, with regard for ethical and legal responsibilities.
11. Approval of these policies is an important part of the Accreditation process. Saffron Walden Museum has maintained its Accredited status since the inception of the Scheme and was last reviewed in 2014/15. It is due for an Accreditation Review from January 2020, when a letter is expected from the Arts Council England (ACE) to trigger the six-month review period. During this time, the Museum will have to complete a lengthy and detailed on-line questionnaire and upload policies, plans and other evidence, including signed minutes of MMWG and Cabinet meetings concerning the recommendation and approval of principal policies and plans. The Museum must complete its Accreditation return by the deadline in July 2020. All being well, its Accredited status would then be reaffirmed later in 2020.
12. Accreditation represents a standard which the Museum service should meet if it is functioning properly. The Accreditation review is an opportunity to run a 'health check' on the service and provide reassurance to the Council and Saffron Walden Museum Society Ltd that there are no significant problems with the operation of the service.
13. The Museum needs to maintain its Accredited status to be eligible for grants from heritage-sector organisations such as the National Heritage Lottery Fund and many others. Access to external funding from such bodies is essential for the Museum's development plans and some activities.

14. Loss of accredited status would also be likely to impact on the Museum's image and public confidence. This in turn would make it difficult for the Museum Society to raise funds in support of the Museum from charitable donations and grants, including grants towards purchase of important new acquisitions for the collections and displays (the Museum Society owns the collections and therefore all funds for new acquisitions are provided through the Society and not by the Council).
15. Two further documents will require Cabinet approval as part of the Accreditation process – the Documentation Policy and Forward Plan. These are scheduled to go to Cabinet on 1 April 2020.

Risk Analysis

16.

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
Museum fails to complete Accreditation return in time	2	3	Timetable has been created that ensures relevant policies and plans are approved ahead of July 2020 deadline.
Museum fails to meet Accreditation standard	1	3	Working through policies and plans will help to identify any weak areas, and address these either immediately or in development plans.
Museum development plans, including associated fundraising strategy to achieve them, are deferred or halted	2	3	Maintaining Accredited status ensures the Museum is eligible to apply for grants and support from external funding organisations
Public confidence in the Museum falls	2	2	Maintaining Accredited status is a mark that the Museum is well-run

1 = Little or no risk or impact

2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.

3 = Significant risk or impact – action required

4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.