

## ABERDEEN CITY COUNCIL

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COMMITTEE	<b>Education Culture and Sport</b>
DATE	<b>28 March 2013</b>
DIRECTOR	<b>Gayle Gorman</b>
TITLE OF REPORT	<b>Service Provision in Museums &amp; Galleries during closure of Provost Skene's House</b>
REPORT NUMBER:	<b>ECS/13/016</b>

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### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

This report provides members with an update on proposals for the alternative delivery of museum provision during the temporary closure of Provost Skene's House as a measure to facilitate the demolition process of the neighbouring St Nicholas House.

### **2. RECOMMENDATION(S)**

That the Tolbooth Museum opening hours are increased during 2013/14 from seasonal summer hours only to the entire year.

### **3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no additional costs. The cost of extending the opening period of the Tolbooth Museum can be met from the Museums and Galleries revenue budget by transferring existing salary costs and activity expenditure from Provost Skene's House.

### **4. OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

The staff who normally work at Provost Skene's House have been accommodated within the Museums and Galleries section's other venues. Museum Assistants will be part of the rota covering security and visitor engagement duties at the Tolbooth Museum.

Provost Skene's House currently holds Full Accreditation status. Accreditation is a set of national standards for UK museums administered by Arts Council England (ACE) for the entire United Kingdom, in partnership with Museums Galleries Scotland, Northern

Ireland Museums Council and CyMAL. To achieve Full Accreditation status museums must meet published requirements in how they care for and document their collections, how they are governed and managed, and on the information and services they offer to their users. As Provost Skene's House will be closed to the public for a temporary period its status will be changed to Provisional during this time. This is standard practice for any museum or gallery which is closed for a temporary period for redevelopment or other appropriate reasons.

The Tolbooth Museum does not hold Accreditation status currently. The Museums and Galleries service applied for Full Accreditation Status for the building in January 2013 and is awaiting the outcome of the application. If this is known by the time of the committee meeting it will be reported to members.

Both Aberdeen Art Gallery and Aberdeen Maritime Museum hold Full Accreditation status, therefore the service will not be precluded from applying for grants and awards which are only available to accredited museum services.

## **5. BACKGROUND/MAIN ISSUES**

Provost Skene's House closed to the public on 25 February 2013 to facilitate minimal disruption to the safe demolition of the neighbouring St Nicholas House. This is a 48 week contract, which started on 5 March 2013. The public displays are now protected for the demolition period and the collections packed and protected. Lenders of exhibits were contacted in advance and individual agreement reached on how best to protect their loans on site during the work period. A programme of weekly checks on the building and contents is underway and will continue throughout the demolition project.

Museums and Galleries staff who normally work at the site have been allocated duties at alternative sites.

A film tour of the venue is now hosted on the Museums and Galleries website (<http://www.aagm.co.uk/Venues/ProvostSkenesHouse/psh-history.aspx>) helping to maintain the profile of the building and collections.

Museums and Galleries wishes to extend the opening hours of the Tolbooth Museum to retain a choice of museums for visitors throughout the year. The usual Provost Skene's House opening hours (Mon-Sat 10:00am – 5:00pm) will be transferred to the venue, thus enhancing the Tolbooth's previous opening hours.

The programme will include four temporary exhibitions on topics of local and social history interest, including food and nutrition and costume, which might previously have been programmed for Provost Skene's House. There will also be a series of regular lunchtime talks, special events for Tartan Day and Doors Open Day, increased

opportunities for school and community groups to tour the building and a re-enactment of the 1813 investigation into the Wreck of the Oscar in May to co-incide with the 200<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

During the Easter School holidays the focus of Museums and Galleries activity will be on the newly refurbished Oil and Gas galleries at Aberdeen Maritime Museum. It is therefore proposed that the Tolbooth Museum re-opens on Friday 12 April for the final weekend of the holidays. The opening exhibition will be a History of Duthie Park which will coincide with the official re-opening of the park on 30 June 2013.

Activity at the Tolbooth is programmed until 31 March 2014 and plans for the year 2014/15 will be developed taking into account the proposals for the St Nicholas House site and their impact on the safe re-opening of Provost Skene's House to the public.

## **6. IMPACT**

By extending the opening hours of the Tolbooth Museum to all year round the Museums and Galleries service will continue to offer a range of visitor engagement opportunities and will continue to programme social and local history themed topics during the temporary closure of Provost Skene's House to the public.

## **7. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Finance and Resources Committee 15 January 2013

## **8. REPORT AUTHOR DETAILS**

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